

Getting the Most from Your Library Media Center



Acknowledgements



Purpose

Using this information will assist Torrey Pines High School students with research steps necessary for classroom assignments. The processes outlined here can apply to any discipline: Science, English, Social Sciences and others.

Individual teachers may have specific procedures as well as other final requirements, but the methods for moving through a research process will remain essentially the same.

What's expected of me? Where do I begin?

You've been given an assignment. What does your teacher expect? Is it a research paper, or a final group project presentation with visuals and handouts, or a combination of all these?

Some teachers outline exactly what's required; others leave the assignment much more open-ended. Through your years at Torrey Pines High School, you will have both specific and general assignments. Many of these can be approached with many of the same methods.

In all cases, it's essential that you understand exactly what's expected of you. That may mean reading the assignment several times, re-reading part of your textbook, or asking the teacher questions. If the assignment is particularly complex, putting the assignment in your own words and adding notes from your teacher's answers can be helpful. You may also want other students to explain the assignment to you. If you are really in doubt, ask your teacher directly. When you come into the LMC without a clear idea of the tasks at hand, research is unproductive and frustrating. The first step requires you to:

- * Understand exactly the size and scope of the assignment.
- * Understand the meanings of all the words used in the assignment.
- * Ask your teacher to clarify the assignment or terms used.
- * Enter the due date in your daily planner. If your teacher has due dates for components of the project, enter those as well.

Like learning and practicing a sport, writing and completing an assignment well means spending quality time on it, refining it, and putting forth your best effort.

GLOBAL REACH. LOCAL TOUCH.



Where do I Look and What will I Find?

Now that you are sure of the assignment, you can begin to look for resources. In the Torrey Pines High School Library Media Center, there are abundant print and non-print materials at your disposal. To begin your search, you need to make a keyword list.

A **keyword list** is created as you begin to research at the most basic level and continues as you become more knowledgeable about your topic. A keyword list will assist as you search print and technology resources and certainly as you use the Internet. In fact, as you continue to search, add, and refine your keyword list, it will become more helpful.



- * The **keyword list** can begin by jotting down names, places, events, and items that are associated with your assignment. Where do you start building your list?
- * **Textbooks:** those assigned for the course.
- * **Encyclopedias:** will assist you with general information on your topic. If the article has an outline, it may contain related people, places, and items that are also discussed in other encyclopedia articles. This is an excellent way to build your keyword list. The LMC has science, American and world biographies, art, health, music, philosophy, and other specialized encyclopedias, in addition to

general encyclopedias. The LMC also has encyclopedias in Spanish. *All these books are located in the REF or Reference section of the LMC.*

Atlases, almanacs: Atlases can assist you with geographical, environmental, astronomy, and population research. Many atlases contain helpful graphs and charts. Almanacs are quick, handy references to statistics that can be used for comparing and contrasting. *These books are located in REF or Reference section.*

- * Check the Library Media Center "Research Links." <http://access.gale.com/torreypines/>.
- * The library subscribes to databases connecting you to excellent primary and secondary sources.
- * Go to your teachers' webpages to find additional web sites relevant to specific courses. Don't forget to write down the addresses of the best web sites so you can find them easily.
- * Always check a web site for author(s) and construction date. Check the URL. If it ends in .edu, most likely, it's from a university, but is it from a professor or a student? Critically analyze what you read. Don't assume the information is fact. Often, it's someone's opinion.
- * Always verify "facts" with other resources, including print and non-print materials before incorporating them into your assignment.

Assessing Information



- * Skim and scan for relevant information, facts, and opinions.
- * Differentiate between primary and secondary sources. (Primary materials, for example, include narratives by slaves; secondary materials include summaries of those slave narratives) The *Library of Congress* web site, <http://www.loc.gov/> contains primary and secondary source documents.
- * Recognize errors, omissions, and misinformation.
- * Select appropriate information.
- * Revise and redefine search, if necessary.

With today's technology, taking notes can be easy. You can **copy and paste** your notes into a word-processing program. Microsoft Word is our district's standard. (At home, you may have a different program.) Remember, however, that these are notes only, and not the final product. **AVOID PLAGARISM.**

As with a printed source, **always include bibliographic or works cited information.** Refer to the [Style Manual](#) on the "Research Links" page for citation and bibliographic information. Citing Internet sources can be difficult, because sites can change. It's a good idea to check with your teacher, or visit [Purdue University](#) . As you are reading and re-reading your notes, create themes or idea folders and move quotes or notes into those appropriate folders. Don't forget to take the citation information, too.

Resources

The Library's [Research Links](#) page contains all the online resources you'll need. In addition, it contains:

- * **Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC):** The Online Public Access Catalog or Online Catalog is easy to use! Use your keywords to search. If you are searching for more than one word at a time, use the "Boolean" button. This can be a very powerful way to search. . OPAC is your key to LMC books, videos, audio CDs, art, and study prints available for check out. *(Ask for assistance at the circulation desk for the location of videos and audio CDs.)*
- * **Access LMC resources on the Research Links webpage,**
 - o World Book Encyclopedia Online: excellent, basic, up-to-date references for articles, population numbers, and government statistics when information must be current.
- * **Internet:** Using your keywords and searching the Internet may be productive, but it should be used with care. Meta search engines, such as Google, Yahoo and Wikipedia can be carefully used, but remember that some websites contain biased, inaccurate information framed to look valid. Sources should always be double checked for accuracy. The library's online websites contain the most carefully checked websites available to you. Use keywords you have been writing down for searching.

Many teachers use [Turnitin.com](#), an anti-plagiarism site to check student papers. Always correctly cite your resources to avoid such problems.

Computer Use at School: To use any computer at Torrey Pines High School, you and your parents must first sign the San Dieguito Union High School District Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). To access school computers, the username is: last name first initial of first name last four digits of permanent ID number (no spaces or commas) for example smithj1234 For the password, enter your entire permanent ID number and then you will be prompted to change your password. Change it immediately and memorize your password. Never share it with anyone. Failure to follow these and other SDUHSD policies may result in losing your computer access. You receive \$10 "FREE" printing per school year. After that, you may add money to your account at the library circulation desk, if you need additional pages to print.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of these procedures, please see the Library Staff.

When you find very little information on your topic, perhaps you need to broaden, modify, or revise your topic. Have you explored all the associated keywords you've found? *Now is a good time to double check with the teacher's assignment to make sure you're on target.*

Interpretation and Analysis

- * Summarize your notes: look for themes, controversial ideas and interpretations.
- * Paraphrase and use quotations (and citations).
- * Compare and re-examine information from different sources.
- * Make connections between various concepts; include your own ideas. Without these connections, the research is separate, distinct ideas without original thought. Create an outline with the main points. Add details.
- * Draw conclusions and your own interpretations.

(Check your Style Manual for specifics.)

Citations and Bibliography

Information about citations and bibliographies can now be found in detail in your [Style Manual Falcon Version](#). The TPHS [Style Manual](#) is available online ONLY. This manual is used by many classroom teachers, so refer to it throughout your years at Torrey Pines.



Presentations

The introduction and conclusion of the presentation includes your interpretations and extensions of thought. Don't forget though, to follow your teacher's procedures. If your final is a presentation, follow the assignment process. If it is open-ended, choose the best method of presentation. This may include a:

- * poster
- * newspaper, magazine, or book
- * original video
- * computer-generated presentation
- * web-based presentation
- * play (with costumes)

Of course, your imagination can create many more ideas than the list above. Good Luck!