

ENG 238

TECHNICAL WRITING & RESEARCH METHODS

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Research Methods

Two Methods:

Primary

Secondary

Primary Research

Discovering or creating
technical information yourself

Secondary Research

Finding information that other
people have already
discovered or created

The Process

You move from secondary
research TO primary research

WHY?

Academic versus Technical

Academic question usually more abstract than applied

Technical research or workplace research is entirely contextualized by the application or practical question you want to answer.

Academic versus Technical

To do good research, you need good questions.

WHAT IS YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION?

(Refer to Chapter 5, pp. 83-84)

What Is Your Topic?

Your research question may differ from your topic

You may want to know: should my department change its webpage?

But what should your research question be?

What *kinds of sources* should I find?

How Will What We Need?

Consult our library and its databases

Talk to a librarian

Read and Skim various kinds of articles

Use Indexes on Library Webpage

Interviews

What Questions do you want to answer?

Who could provide this information?

Will the person be interviewed?

Interviews

Search for the kind of person who can answer the question.

Consider expertise.

Contact the person and state clearly what you want to ask about.

Explain why you have chosen them, and explain what you plan to do with the information.

If you cite an interview in your report, provide a transcript (in an appendix).

Questionnaires

Must be qualified

Respondents will misinterpret questions

Won't obtain as many responses as you would like.

No guarantee respondents are representative

Questionnaires

Don't use biased language.

Don't ask: should the department improve its website?

Be specific

Should the department include a blog on its website?

(See Choices and Strategies in Ch. 5, pp. 103)

Questionnaires

Test your questionnaire on a few people.

Present questionnaire data in your report.

Put most important results in the body, least important in appendix.

Present all data and questionnaire in appendix.

Researching Our Topics

Identify your topic

Develop a series of research questions?

Identify *kinds of sources* you will need to use.

Tutorial: How do we do it.