ENGL 101
Information Seeking Process
Step 1. Define the task

A. Define your information problem.

1. Give a brief description of your topic or research task.

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Action: Write one or two sentences describing the topic. Be as specific possible.

Purposes: To think about topic, so that actions are not haphazard.
To begin to establish what words describe your information need, so that
you can use these words when entering searches in electronic information
systems or when scanning back-of-book indexes.

Dilemma: Your topic may have to be broad at first, until you have learned enough
about the topic to focus more specifically.

Future actions: Continue to refine and focus what you need to know over the course of your
research. What you need to know will change as you learn more.

2. Write down questions you will need to answer during your research.

Are there terms you need to have defined? processes you need to understand? specific
kinds of evidence to find? statistics to support your contentions?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Example Topic:
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SMOKING AND HEART DISEASE

Possible questions:
What are the most common health effects of smoking?
or
How does smoking cause heart disease?
or
What is the death rate from heart disease?

3. Determine what individual concepts make up the topic. Go back to A1 and A2 and highlight key words in
your topic description and questions. Most topics have from one to three concepts. List the concepts of your topic
here:

Concepts (keywords):
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
## Step 2. Develop a strategy for finding the information

### A. Identify potential sources of information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>Actions:</th>
<th>Select potential kinds of information you will need, using checklist below. Prioritize the order in which you will seek the information.</th>
<th>Purpose(s):</th>
<th>To identify what kinds of information you will need to find. To choose an order in which to seek the different kinds of information.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dilemma:</td>
<td>You may not know exactly what kinds of information will be most useful. Some will be dead ends.</td>
<td>Future actions:</td>
<td>Ask the librarian for help if you are uncertain about kinds of information. Continue to consider additional kinds as you continue your research. What you need may change as you learn more and your research becomes narrower and more focused</td>
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</tbody>
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#### 1. Consider what kinds of information you will need. Place a checkmark by those you will need. These kinds of information may be in print, in database, on Web, on CD, etc:

- ○ definition
- ○ general overview about a topic, person, issue, etc.
- ○ very current coverage
- ○ focused, short description or analysis
- ○ in-depth, comprehensive coverage
- ○ images
- ○ sounds
- ○ video
- ○ statistic (population; % of people affected; etc.)
- ○ how-to information
- ○ address/phone number
- ○ biography of person
- ○ literary analysis of a text
- ○ geographical
- ○ laws or court cases

#### 2. Determine what types of sources will contain the kinds of information you selected in Step2A1. Select potential sources of information by placing a check by those you will use. Types of sources may be in print, in database, on Web, on CD, etc:

- ○ dictionaries
- ○ encyclopedias
- ○ newspapers on web
- ○ newspapers/magazines/journals
- ○ monographs/books
- ○ image collections
- ○ sound collections; albums, soundtracks, etc.
- ○ video collections; individual videos
- ○ statistical sources
- ○ manuals and handbooks
- ○ directories
- ○ biographical reference sources and directories
- ○ monographs/books; journal articles
- ○ geographical sources (e.g., gazetteers, atlases)
- ○ legal information (e.g., legislative law, judicial law)
3. Identify what search tools will be used to find the types of sources

| Types of sources | Type of search tool for locating the source | Specific search tools | Strategy for topic
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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. specialized encyclopedia -- to define topic &amp; get background knowledge.</td>
<td>1. library catalog</td>
<td>1. Mundt Library Catalog</td>
<td>CONNSIONS BETWEEN SMOKING AND HEART DISEASE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. pro/con & hot topic sources – to get background knowledge on the pros & cons | 2. pro/con or hot topic database | 2a. CQ Researcher database (or print index)  
2b. Opposing Viewpoints database | 2. Will look for overview article in CQ Researcher on smoking by searching the CQ Researcher database and will check for additional articles and book chapters in Opposing Viewpoints database. |
| 4. articles in magazine | 4. periodical (magazine & journal) database | 4a. Research Library (in Proquest)  
4b. Academic Search Premier (in Ebsco) | 4. Find current articles in popular and scholarly health magazines on smoking and heart disease. Will search Academic Search Premier (in Ebsco). |
| 5. statistics | 5. statistical source | 5. Ask librarian for best source. | 5. Find statistics that demonstrate the relationship between smoking & heart disease. Ask a Librarian and be directed to a good source such as the National Center for Health Statistics. |
B. Develop an online search strategy with the concepts you identified in Step 1A3.

1. What words will people use to describe your topic? Enter up to 3 main concepts identified in step 1A3.

   **Note:** Not all words in the description of a topic represent concepts that need to be part of your search strategy. In the example in Step 1A3 above, the phrase "connections between" does describe what you are seeking, but will the word “connections” contribute to better search results? Ask yourself… Are most articles about smoking and heart disease likely to use the word “connections?”

   **Concept 1:**  
   **Concept 2:**  
   **Concept 3:**
   

2. For each concept, are there alternate words -- synonyms or related terms – that should also be searched? Consider how others might talk about the topic in articles or books. For each concept identified Step2B1, list additional terms to be searched. If

   **Synonyms for Concept 1:**
   **Synonyms for Concept 2:**
   **Synonyms for Concept 3:**

   **Narrower terms for concepts (if needed):**
   **Broader terms for concepts (if needed):**

3. Translate the search strategy in Step2B2 above into a search command using search techniques (Boolean operators, truncation, etc.) for an EBSCOhost database.

   **Example topic:**
   **Database:** Academic Search Premier
   **Information Service:** EBSCOhost
   **Search Strategy 1:** smok* and heart
   **Search Strategy 2:** tobacco and heart
4. Translate the search strategy into a search command for the Library Catalog.

Database: Library Catalog
Information Service: SD Library Network
Search Strategy: _________________________________________________

Example topic:
Database: Library Catalog
Information Service: SD Library Network
Search Strategy 1: smok* and heart
Search Strategy 2: tobacco and heart
or
Broader Search 3: smoking or tobacco

5. Translate the search strategy into a search command for a database in Proquest.

Database: _________________________________________________
Information Service: Proquest
Search Strategy: _________________________________________________

Example topic:
Database: Research Library
Information Service: Proquest
Search Strategy 1: smok* and heart
Search Strategy 2: tobacco and heart

Step 3. Locate the Information … and … Step 4. Evaluate and Select Materials

A. Do the search in EBSCOhost that you described in Step 2B3 above and evaluate the results.
   1. How many items did you retrieve with the search? _______
   2. How many of the items in the results list can you use? __________

   Note: If you did not retrieve what you needed, evaluate your search results. Are you using the right words to describe the topic? Are you using the right sources? Are you using the right tools to get to the sources you need?

B. Describe one item that you found and believe you will use…

   Author _____________________________________________
   Article Title __________________________________________
   Title of publication ___________________________________
   Volume _________
   Issue _________
   Date of publication __________________
   Page numbers ________________________
   Describe the purpose of the article (that is, what is author's main point?) ______________________________________________________

   Describe the value of the article to your project (that is, how will it contribute to your understanding) ______________________________________________________