1. Get to know your librarian.

Librarians are Drake faculty members here to help you with research projects, papers and assignments. In addition to providing general research help, each librarian has a subject specialty and can work with your on topics relevant to your major. You can even schedule an individual consultation with a librarian at any stage of your research or simply stop by the reference desk near the computers in Cowles Library.
Shown in the photo are four of Drake's 12 librarians, from left to right: Carrie Dunham-LaGree, subject speciality in Journalism; Bart Schmidt, subject specialities in History and the Study of Culture and Society; Priya Shenoy, subject specialities in Biology, Chemistry, Pharmacy and Health Sciences; Marcia Keyser, subject specialty in Education.

2. Get started early.
Don't wait until the last minute to choose your topic or begin your research. Finding a topic that isn't too big or too narrow or too obscure can be the most difficult step in research. And you'll probably need to do a few searches to make sure that you can find the type and quality of sources that you need.

Here's a nice one-page guide from the University of California at Santa Cruz on how to [Choose a Research Topic](#).

Your librarian can be great resource at this stage of research. Librarians can help you choose a topic, evaluate available sources and construct useful searches. Stop in or visit [libraryhelp.drake.edu](http://libraryhelp.drake.edu) to connect with a librarian today.
3. Go beyond Google and Wikipedia.

Wikipedia is great for getting a general overview of a topic and Google can point you to useful web sites, books and news reports but the plain fact of the matter is that the open web is not the best place to do research.

The Library has databases of scholarly information in the sciences, business, journalism, social sciences and humanities that contain material you can't get through a regular web search. Our tools like SuperSearch and Web of Science take research to the next level.

It can be hard to know where to start -- we have over 100 databases -- but don't worry. Our librarians have put together Research Guides that can help you find the best databases for your subject . . . or just ask at libraryhelp.drake.edu.

4. Use advanced search techniques.

Just as important as where you search is how you search. Advanced search helps you narrow down your results to articles or sources that are truly relevant to your topic.

Basic search relies on a few broad terms and tends to return too many results. You may end up having to wade through dozens or hundreds of
possible sources to find the half-dozen that are truly "on-topic."

Librarians can help you construct highly efficient and effective searches that make research easier, faster and better. Scheduling a research consultation is a great way to get that help. Go to libraryhelp.drake.edu and choose "Schedule a Consultation" or click this link to get started.

5. Build your research database.

RefWorks is your online research database. It's free to Drake students (for life!) so you can continue to use it after college throughout your career.

Keeping track of references and creating bibliographies for papers used to be a time-consuming task. RefWorks changes all that. With RefWorks you can easily organize, record and manage your research data, access your data from anywhere and even collaborate and share your references and notes with other students. RefWorks also provides an online style guide for formatting your bibliographies and citations.

Create a personal account with your Drake email address on first use and use RefWorks to track citations and create bibliographies. This account remains active even after you leave Drake.

There are lots of video tutorials on using RefWorks and, of course, the librarians will be happy to give you a personal introduction.
6. Learn how to read scholarly books and articles.

Understanding scholarly articles can be a little challenging when you first encounter them. Scholarly writing is done by experts for experts and is structured in a certain way. In addition to understanding the more formal terminology that is used, knowing the parts of a scholarly article like "abstracts," "literature reviews," and "methodologies" can really help you decide if an article or book is appropriate for your research.

Learn about the parts of a scholarly article using [this nifty tool from North Carolina State University](http://library.northcarolinastate.edu) or stop by Cowles Library and [ask a librarian or contact us through libraryhelp.drake.edu](http://libraryhelp.drake.edu). We'll be glad to work with you to make your research better and faster.

7. Avoid plagiarism.
Research and scholarly writing at the college level requires careful attention to properly citing and crediting the sources of information you use in papers, project and even in presentations. It's very important to understand how to avoid plagiarism, the uncredited use of another person's words or ideas -- either intentional or unintentional. Technology has only it easier to accidentally appropriate the work of someone else. The short video above from Bainbridge State College is a quick introduction to the topic.

To learn more about properly citing sources and ideas and how to use your own words, ask a librarian . . . we'll be glad to help.