

TEACHER'S GUIDE TO WRITE IT!

The research process and *Write It!* . . .

What is the question?

All research begins with a question. It may be a question posed from personal interest, such as “How do dolphins communicate?” It may be a question developed from a need for personal information, such as “What cars have the best maintenance record?” Or it may be a question resulting from a problem such as “How can we institute school wide recycling?” In class research projects, the question may be posed by the teacher or chosen by the class based on class discussion. Basing class research on a question such as “What is the evidence of global warming?” or “What caused the Renaissance?” sets the stage for collaboration, debate, discussion, and evaluation.

Write It! shows students how to state and support a position

All good research projects begin with a focus question. The thesis statement is a clear, concise answer to that focus question. *Write It!* shows examples of how to turn a research question or research topic into a thesis statement. The thesis statement guides investigation, evaluation, organization, and presentation. A good thesis statement, which makes a position clear to the audience, is essential for an effective presentation whether your research will be read, viewed, or heard.

Is there a systematic way to approach research?

Finding information is the part of research that changes most rapidly. With access to automated library catalogs and online Internet resources, it is no longer difficult to find information. In fact, the biggest challenge students face are how to develop an efficient search strategy to find information and how to select the best information to use. If an online search results in an overwhelming number of items, it is difficult and time-consuming to select the best information. Much of the information may not support the thesis and, with the glut of information, many results may be inaccurate, biased, or outdated.

Write It! shows students smart searching techniques

Finding information is much more efficient when applying two skills: reading for background information and planning a logical search strategy. *Write It!* shows how to use background reading to identify keywords and how to broaden or narrow a topic. *Write It!* also includes examples of effective search techniques. Examples of actual searches can be adapted to fit many topics. *Write It!* provides three specific questions to help students determine the type of information needed, and four questions to help students evaluate the information they find. Staying organized is essential when there is a lot of information. The “Sample Research Log” in *Write It!* saves time and prevents repeating searches.

How can students learn how different types of sources are cited?

Citing sources is an essential part of research and scholarship. It is a researcher's academic responsibility to give credit to other scholars. Original works such as books, articles, stories, music, art, computer programs, or scientific formulas is the intellectual property of the author and that authorship must be credited by anyone using the work.

Write It! gives students examples of how to cite sources to give credit

One of the standard systems for citing information was first published in 1977 by the Modern Language Association (MLA) and is now in its sixth edition. *Write It!* is based on the MLA documentation system. Because several citation systems are acceptable, students should focus on using the examples to be consistent and comprehensive, rather than learning a system. Chapter 4 contains examples of actual citations for more than forty specific sources often used by students. Looking at sample citations as a guide makes citing sources very easy.