

Library Assignment DOs and DON'Ts



DON'T assume that students know how to use a library or do research.

Examples: incomplete references, insufficient information to solve the problem, floating Internet sites, items not owned by UCF.

Why: When students don't have a clue where to begin, total frustration causes research to become a negative, failure-related experience.

DO: Assess your students' library skills.
Test your assignments to ensure that UCF owns a required item.
Watch for inappropriate rules such as, you must or must not use the Internet.
Provide written instructions and examples.
Schedule library instruction for your students prior to assignments.
Consult with a librarian about the assignment. Discuss the amount and type of help students should receive.



DON'T send 700 students (or even 7) to the Library to use the same item.

Examples: one landmark article, same assignment year after year.

Why: library materials are destroyed from overuse, stolen, hidden or just not available. Lack of variety in assignments tempts cheating.

DO: Place the item in question, or several copies, on reserve.
Ask questions that indicate an ability to find items without actually doing so.
Allow variety in choice of topic, encourage diversification in resources.



DON'T waste time on trivia.

Examples: Scavenger hunts, trivia, busy work, using the library as a baby-sitting service.

Why: Hunting for little known facts, unrelated to course-work teaches nothing. Students get in the mode of completing tasks rather than thinking and learning.

DO: Encourage critical thinking that requires integration of knowledge.
Ask students to examine, compare, and evaluate various tools that they use to find the facts.
Provide feedback on completed exercises.

IDEAS FOR AN EFFECTIVE LIBRARY ASSIGNMENT

- ◆ Select a topic and find two articles, one from a popular magazine and one from a scholarly journal. To find articles start at the Library Homepage. Choose Database Titles A-Z. Use indexes such as the Academic Index and Readers' Guide Abstracts. Write a one-page analysis on the differences in approach and content.

- ◆ Choose a favorite book. Find two reviews of the book. Compare and contrast the critical reception it received in a one-page report. (Hint: WebLUIIS, FirstSearch, Book Review Digest.)

- ◆ Select a subject of interest (for example, Parapsychology, Space Exploration, Rock Music). Determine the Library of Congress call numbers of five books on the subject. Check copyright dates of each, examine content, and write a two-page paper recording impressions, differences, and developments in the subject matter.

- ◆ Select a topic which has been of sustained interest in the 20th Century (for examples; KKK, Titanic, Kennedy assassination, Statehood for Israel). Summarize accounts of this subject over the past thirty years, at decade intervals, in the New York Times newspaper.

- ◆ Choose three prominent individuals in a particular discipline. Locate biographical data about each and present their differences, similarities, strengths, weaknesses, etc. in a ten-minute presentation to the class.

- ◆ Prepare a ten title, annotated bibliography of information sources on a topic related to the class curriculum.

- ◆ Select a topic. Using the Library of Congress Subject Headings and at least two indexes, compile a list of fifteen synonyms (related terms) which could be used when researching that topic. Cite sources of each subject or keyword.



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA LIBRARIES

<http://library.ucf.edu>