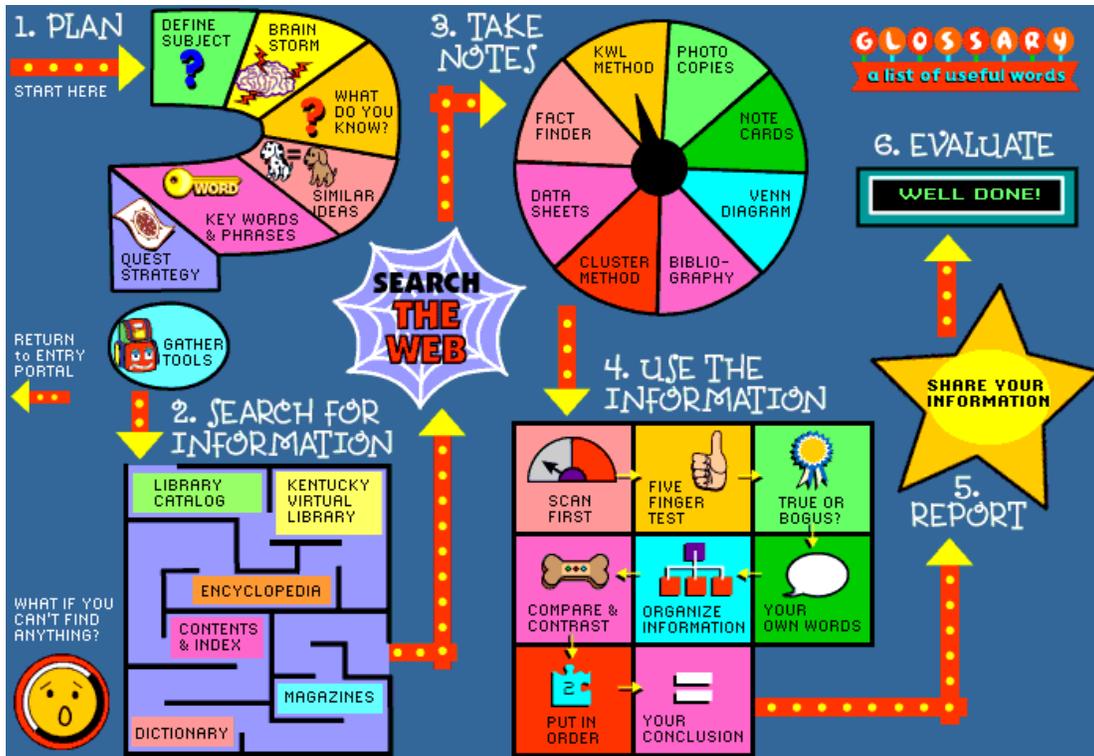


# ALERT RESEARCHER



With permission: <http://www.kyvl.org/html/kids/homebase.html>



Name \_\_\_\_\_



# The journey begins...

*The purpose of this Research Unit is to have you, the student, learn the process of researching, recording, and presenting information, while studying an area of personal interest to you. This is your Research Project, you are in charge, and you get to choose!*

## **STEP ONE**

The planning stage:

There are two parts to this stage. You will be selecting your topic and developing a research question.

### **Selecting your topic:**

1. Brainstorm ideas – What are you interested in? What do you want to find out more about? Do you have any “I wonder why...?” questions?



It is important to check at this starting point to see if you can locate information about your topic. Is it going to hold your interest? Undertake a preliminary search to see how much you can find.

### **Developing your question:**

After selecting a topic think about developing good study questions. “Good questions lead to quality independent studies,” (Johnson & Goree, 2005, p.20). There are different things you can do to develop a research question. Here are some ideas from books such as *Nonfiction Matters* by Stephanie Harvey, *Painless Research Projects* by Rebecca Elliott and James Elliott, *Independent Study for Gifted Learners* by Susan Johnsen and Krystal Goree, and

*Independent Study Program* by Susan Johnsen and Kathryn Johnson to help you.

a) Brainstorming and listing all the questions related to your topic is a good place to start. You might find a main question amongst them or be able to group them and find a 'big' question that grows out of them.

b) Start a K-W-L (What you KNOW, WANT to know, and have LEARNED) or K-U-D (What you want to KNOW, UNDERSTAND, and be able to DO) chart to help you! You will add to this as you work through your project.

### **K U D Chart!**

<b>What you want to KNOW</b>	<b>What you want to UNDERSTAND</b>	<b>What you want to be able to DO</b>

c) Advice on Selecting an Issue

Characteristics of an issue:

- Choose a 'Real World' issue that is relevant to some groups of people (stakeholders) but can also be interesting to others. It is ambiguous with no clear-cut or easy solutions. As new information is obtained, the problem changes.

- Represent the multiple points of view on your topic. Different people or groups have different points of view. Depending upon how/if the issue is resolved, stakeholders stand to win or lose tangible things, such as income and recreational areas, or intangible things, such as solitude and freedom of speech.
- Choose something that is practical to research with substantial information available. Remember that to develop a convincing argument; you will need multiple sources of information and data.
- Choose a worthy topic with which you can feel personally involved. Research offers the opportunity to ask questions about things that matter. While asking questions and seeking solutions, consider the arguments of others and contribute your personal perspective and original thinking. When you care about an issue, you will be willing to spend time digging for evidence, taking a stand, developing an argument, and proposing a resolution to the problem.

(Adapted from 'Characteristics of an Issue':

Autobiographies, CGE, College of William and Mary and [www.nps.k12.va.us/aaa/media/manual/PDF/MediaInstr-1.pdf](http://www.nps.k12.va.us/aaa/media/manual/PDF/MediaInstr-1.pdf) )

d) BIG QUESTIONS/Little Questions! (S. Johnsen and K. Johnson)

Little questions are those that can easily be answered, sometimes with a "yes" or "no" or a simple fact while the big questions demand deeper research, analysis, and evaluations. Consider the different levels of questions in BLOOMS Revised Taxonomy. Use combinations of key question words. Good Question Cubes (IIM Independent Investigation Method, Cindy Nottage and Virginia Morse)

I	II	III
Who	Will	Verify
Where	Did	Contrast
Why	Might	Predict
When	Is	Analyze
What/Which	Can	List
How	Would	Compare

Example: How might \_\_\_\_\_ verify...? Which stakeholder would analyze...?

Choose either:

- a) Divide page in half and write BIG QUESTIONS on one side and Little Questions on the other side or,
- b) Brainstorm/mind map as many questions as you can and then use two different colored highlighters or pencils to underline BIG QUESTIONS and Little Questions.

## STEP TWO

The hunt for information...

Sources:

- **Library:** Locate texts on your subject, reference books, magazines, and newspapers
- **Internet:**
  - Google’s KidRex, DISCUS, Yahoo!igans, Kidsclick!, and Ask Kids can be good places to find information (include “for kids” at the end of your search query).
  - On **Renzulli**, you can create a portfolio of information, organize your Independent Study, and search several resources through Renzulli.
  - **Richland County Library Remote Access** allows you to access information from home or school if you have a public library card.
    - Go to: <http://www.myrctl.com/>
    - Click on the blue box **Look It Up**.
    - Then click on the resource you would like to use (i.e., **Encyclopedias; Newspapers, Magazines, and Journals**).

- Once you select your resource, scroll down the page and pick the tool you would like to use (i.e., **Britannica Online for Kids**).
- Scroll down and click on the **Start Now** link. You will be directed to the **Remote Patron Authentication** page.
- Sign in using the # on the back of your library card as your **Borrower ID** and the last four digits of your home phone# as your **pin**.  
(Please note - log-in information current as of December 2012.)

***Sometimes you have to try lots of 'key words' to find what you want! Be persistent. Use your Habits of Mind!***

- Other **electronic sources**, such as videos, radio, DVD's, television programs (History Channel or Discovery Channel, etc.).
- **Original data**. Collect your own information by creating and conducting surveys, drafting maps, and asking people to fill in questionnaires. *Edmodo* Polls, *Survey Monkey*, and Google Forms are excellent resources for survey creation.
- **Interviews**. An expert on your subject is a valuable source of information. You can interview in person, email, Skype, or phone an expert.
- **Media Specialists, Parents, and Teachers** may also guide you to additional resources.

If you cannot find enough information, you may need to widen your subject area and alter your questions. Consulting a variety of sources strengthens your research.

### **STEP THREE**

Gathering information/data...

Now that you have identified your research topic and developed a question to guide your research, it is time to start organizing your research and thinking about the

categories or groups into which you will sort your findings. These categories and groups will help you organize your paragraphs. Everyone will have different categories depending upon their research area. You will have several categories. Here are some suggestions:

- Definition/Description of Topic
- Background Information/History
- Issues
- Identification of Stakeholders
- Viewpoints
- Data Collection
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## TAKING NOTES

Advice on taking notes:

1. **Skim** the whole passage or chapter looking at the titles, subtitles, pictures, captions, diagrams, and labels to get an overview.
2. Write brief points or phrases in **your own words** to summarize the main points. You may use bulleted points.
3. Select only **information relevant** to your study.
4. **Do not copy** from the text unless you are using quotation marks. Refer to lessons/section on plagiarism.
5. Make sure that you **write down the source** of each piece of information so that you know where it came from.
6. You need this for your PAPER and BIBLIOGRAPHY later in case you need to locate that source again.
7. If you take care with this part of the Research Project, the rest of the work will flow more easily!

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Use **MLA** style and **NoodleTools** for referencing.

Make a list of all sources to credit your information.

Use the following rules as you draft your list:

- List sources alphabetically by author's last name.

- In cases with more than one author, use the first author's last name when alphabetizing.
- For each source, begin first line at margin and indent each line that follows.
- *Italicize* titles of books, periodicals, and software. Titles of articles are enclosed in quotation marks followed by punctuation marks.
- If you cannot find a piece of information, such as a name or date, just leave a space and go on to the next part.

### Examples

#### **Book with one author:**

Author's Last Name, First Name Middle Name. *Title of Book*.  
City of publication: Publisher, date of publication. Print  
or Web.

#### **Article in a reference book:**

Author's Last Name, First Name Middle Name. "Article/  
Entry." *Title of Book*. Edition. Year of Publication. Print.

#### **Article in a periodical:**

Author's Last Name, First Name Middle Name. "Article Title."  
*Name of Journal* Volume Number. Issue (Date of  
Publication): Page Numbers. Print.

#### **Dictionary definition:**

"Defined Word." Def. Definition #. *Title of Reference Book*.  
Contributor(s). Edition ed. Vol#. City: Publisher, Year.  
Print. Series Name Series #.

#### **Encyclopedia from an online source:**

Author's Last Name, First Name Middle Name. "Article/  
Entry." *Name of the encyclopedia*. Edition ed. Year of  
Publication. Name of Website or Database. Web. Date  
you viewed It <URL>.

## **World Wide Web:**

Author's Last Name, First Name Middle Name. "Specific Page or Article Title." *Name of Website*. Publisher. Date of Publication. Web. Date you viewed it. <full http address>. (enclosed in angle brackets)

You may use online bibliography makers to create or check your bibliographies:

1. <http://www.noodletools.com/>

Under Free Tools: Click on NoodleBib MLA Starter  
\*Create a new folder (beside New User Icon) using your student ID number and password if you want to save your bibliography.

2. <http://easybib.com/>

## **PLAGIARISM**

Watch out for PLAGIARISM! Plagiarism is defined as taking someone else's ideas and words and pretending they are yours. Even if you do not use their exact words but paraphrase, you should still give them credit if you got a new idea from them.

One great website gives this helpful advice: *"So even if you put the information into your own words, you still should list the source. Ask yourself, 'Would I know this if I hadn't read it on that website or in that book?'* If the answer is *no*, list the source." (Kidshealth for Kids:

<http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/school/plagiarism.html> )

## **INTERVIEW**

Interviewing an expert is a chance to gain extra information about your subject and an opportunity to discuss your area of interest. It also provides you with experience in interviewing an adult in a formal setting.

Steps:

1. Select someone with professional experience in your subject area.

2. Arrange an appointment. (Call or write with your parent's approval.)

Phone Conversation:

- Hello, my name is.....
- I am a student at...
- I am doing a project on...
- I was wondering if I could set up a time to interview you about my project.
- I am available...(give a choice of days and times)

Suggestions for your Interview:

- Prepare a list of at least 10 questions you would like to ask the person.
- Try to avoid asking questions that can be answered with a YES/NO or a few words or questions to which you already know the answers.
- Arrive on time for the interview, be polite, and be prepared!
- When you meet the person, introduce yourself, shake hands, and thank him/her for giving you the interview.
- Your questions serve as a guide but if something of interest comes up during the interview, ask follow-up questions.
- Be considerate of time. Try not to go over 30 minutes.
- Be an active listener. If there is something you do not understand, rephrase and clarify.
- Take notes so that you can write up the interview later. (Or record the interview with permission)
- Thank the person again at the end of the interview and tell him/her how helpful he/she has been to your study.

**After the Interview**

Record your notes while they are still fresh in your mind.

Write a thank you note expressing appreciation for the time that was spent helping you.

The letter should be handwritten rather than typed. This makes it personal.

## Thank You Letter Example

**Your street address**  
**Your city, state, zip code**  
**Date**

**Person to whom you are writing**  
**The company he/she is from, if any**  
**Street address**  
**City, state, zip code**

**Dear Miss, Mrs., Ms., or Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,**

**Thank you very much for the time you spent in helping me with my school project on (your topic). From our interview, I learned (list 3 detailed phrases or sentences expressing what you learned). Thank you again.**

**Sincerely,**

**Your first and last name**

*Important: remember your letter should be detailed enough to make the recipient feel as if you received important information from the interview. Make sure that the letter is personalized (that means it sounds like you) and is handwritten. Focus on VOICE from SIX TRAIT WRITING.*



## **STEP FOUR:**

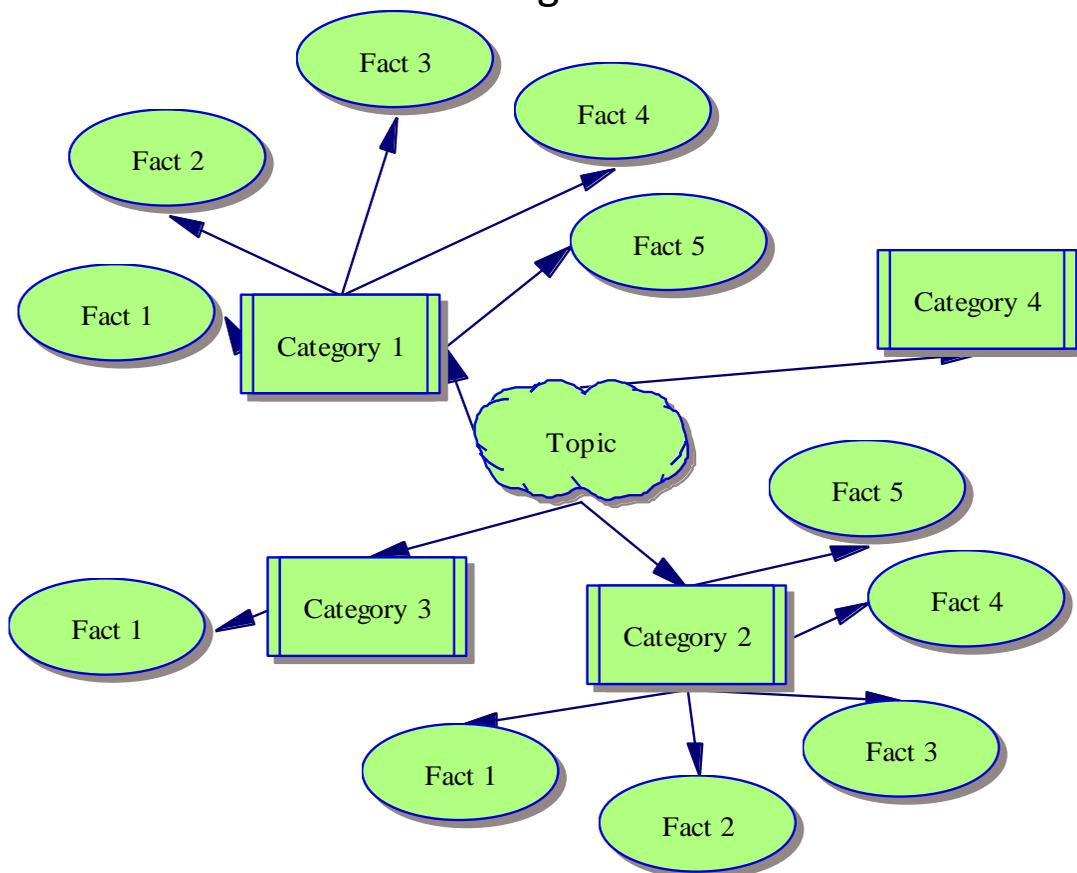
Organizing your notes:

Now that you have collected all of your information, it is time to organize your data into a logical pattern so that you can write your paper and prepare your presentation.

Steps to writing your paper:

- Spread all your cards/notes out on the floor. Review your groupings and reorganize if necessary. The groups will be your paragraphs! Ask a peer to evaluate your groups.
- Create a Mind Map using your groups. Place your topic in the center. See attached page for example. This process will help you sort your ideas and facts into categories.
- Create an outline. An outline will organize your ideas, separating the main ideas from the minor ideas. You can write your paper once you have finished your outline as you now have the plan for the structure of the paper.
- Write your RESEARCH PAPER:
  1. Read your RUBRIC to find out what is required.
  2. Make sure that your paper is legibly written or preferably typed double-spaced. Google Docs is a great resource for typing your work.
  3. You will need one copy to turn in and you may want a copy for yourself (this can be used to practice for the presentation).
  4. Your paper should have a title page with your name, topic, date, school, and ALERT teacher's name on it.
  5. Your bibliography should have at least 5 bibliographic sources in addition to any dictionaries/encyclopedias you may have used.
  6. Think of an introductory paragraph to catch the reader's interest.
  7. Each of your groups/categories will provide the information for a paragraph.
  8. End your paper with a good closing paragraph (conclusion) to summarize your research.

Mind Mapping is a classification that sorts ideas and facts into categories.



Below is an example of an outline developed from the previous mind map. It helps you to separate main ideas from details. It is important to understand that every item in an outline can be expanded with additional research and new information.

**Topic:**

**I. Category 1**

- A. Fact 1**
- B. Fact 2**
- C. Fact 3**
- D. Fact 4**
- E. Fact 5**

**II. Category 2**

- A. Fact 1**
- B. Fact 2**
- C. Fact 3**
- D. Fact 4**
- E. Fact 5**

**III. Category 3**

- A. Fact 1 etc.**

**IV. Category 4**

- A. Fact 1 etc**

## **STEP FIVE:**

Sharing your information

a) Presentation Options...

You need to think of the best way to present and share your research. What will be most effective?

If you use a Display Board you need to follow some guidelines. This is a skill you will be called upon to use throughout your school career.

- You will present at least 20 facts on your board. (For an ALERT Board)
- Your board should be useful in your presentation.
- Include at least one of your original drawings.
- Pictures/graphs/newspaper headlines/ quotes/ diagrams/ captions/ explanations/charts etc. are all allowed!
- Organize your board so it is easy to understand. Use color/catchy titles/headings etc.
- All text must be typed.
- Check for spellings.
- Do not make anything up! Be accurate.
- Be selective. Do not put everything you have found on the board. Look for impact!
- PLAN before you glue! Ask the opinion of others!

If you choose to use a variety of presentation options you need to make sure that each one enhances your presentation and does not simply repeat anything you have already done.

Think about whether it will be:

1. Computer based such as POWERPOINT
2. Paper based such as a handout
3. Model
4. Activity
5. Media
6. Other – you may want to discuss your ideas with your teacher!

b) Presentation...

**At last** you have reached the exciting stage of presenting your research. You are the expert on your subject and you are going to share your knowledge with your focus group and your invited guests!

Let's make this the best possible experience for all!

Checklist:

- Make sure all your materials are prepared ahead of time. Don't be rushing to finish your board/model/product at the last minute.
- If you are using technology –please check that your products/links/presentations will work where you plan to present. **You should check this at least a week before your scheduled presentation.** You may need to make adjustments, reformat your product, bring in supplementary equipment.
- Use note cards with brief notes to remind you of what to say in your presentation. These will usually be bulleted points. You do not read from these but can refer to them in case you forget something.
- Practice your presentation at home, with family or friends, in front of a mirror, or using a tape recorder. Until you actually say it out loud you will not know how long it lasts.
- Practice it again!
- Think about the questions people might ask you. If you do not know the answer, let them know that you do not know. You can say, *"I did not research that particular question"* or *"I am sorry, I do not know that answer."* You can also offer to find out the answer. The one thing you should not do is make up an answer!

## **STEP SIX:**

### Evaluation

You will receive evaluations from others such as your teachers, peers, and families but you also need to reflect on your work and evaluate what you have done. Here are some questions to consider:

- What have you learned – go back to your K-U-D chart!
- How do you feel about your research and presentation?
- What might you do differently next time?
- Which Habits of Mind were most significant in the independent study process?

**Congratulations!**

**Celebrate your success!**

## Works Cited

- Abilock, D. "NoodleBib MLA Starter." *NoodleTools*. N.p., 2010. Web. 15 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.noodletools.com/>>.
- Anderson, Lorin W., et al. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessment: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Longman, 2001. Print.
- Elliott, Rebecca S., and James Elliott. *Painless Research Projects*. New York: Barrons educational Series Inc., 1998. Print.
- Harvey, Stephanie. *Nonfiction Matters*. Portland: Pembroke Publishers, 1998. Print.
- Johnson, Susan K., and Krystal Goree. *Independent Study for Gifted Learners*. Waco: Prufrock Press, 2005. Print.
- Nemours Foundation. "What is Plagiarism?" *KidsHealth for Kids*:. Nemours Foundation, 2010. Web. 15 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.kidshealth.org////.html>>.
- Nottage, Cindy, and Virginia Morse. "Students are never too young to be researchers." Confratute 2008. University of Connecticut. Summer 2008. Oral presentation.
- Official site for the Eiffel Tower*. SETE, July 2006. Web. 30 Sept. 2006. <<http://www.tour-eiffel.fr//>>.
- Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. New York: Gotham, 2003. Print.
- - -. *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: Why Commas Really Do Make a Difference*. New York: G.P.Putnam's Sons, 2006. Print.