

Tips for Designing Effective Research Assignments

- Be specific (and realistic) about your expectations
- Isolate parts of the process, stagger due dates
- Assignment calculator link: www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/
- Take advantage of library instruction (895-2123) and collaboration opportunities (& the Writing Center too!)
- Discuss research concepts and strategies- intellectual property, peer review, topic selection
- Be sure the that the purpose and benefit of the assignment is obvious to students
- Emphasize analysis over answers. Encourage reflection on the process, use failure and frustration as an opportunity for feedback and as a teaching moment

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Sample Assignments

- Students are given a failed search strategy and must troubleshoot to produce better results
- Students create a reading packet- an anthology-type collection for which they write an introduction
- Students read selected materials and rank them, with justifications, as more or less scholarly
- Students keep a log of the search process, noting search terms and/or resources tried (log efforts via threaded discussions on WebCT so students can learn from each others' mistakes).
- Students examine the submission guidelines for a journal, serve as mock editors in a peer review process (could use own work or could pull material from a paper mill)
- Students write questions on a topic that demonstrate an understanding of the issues
- For every opinion there is an equal and opposite opinion. Students examine letters to the editor for dubious statements & develop a well supported response
- Students prepare a resume for a person they have researched

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