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A community to help you grow, scale and thrive.



QUALITY RESEARCH MATTERS

Research Skills are Important as a Student or in a Career

In research you find pieces of a puzzle and put them together. You acquire new, appropriate and credible information and then approach that information in a critical way; to scrutinize, organize, evaluate and clarify the details into intelligence that can be used to illuminate a thought, problem, or need that drives the research.

CORRO STUDYPLUS

Set the Stage for Student Success

Exclusive Resources for Students on a Career Trajectory

Why Research Skills are Important

Good research is the basis of everything we know. Research helps us answer our most burning questions and find solutions to problems. As you search for new knowledge online, in a library, lab or in the field, we trust you do so with an open mind to explore various explanations and using a critical approach to scrutinize, organize, evaluate and clarify the details. Since we live in an information-rich world, knowing how to develop excellent research skills can help you in several ways throughout your studies and going forward in a career or in conducting business.

► **Students Need Academic Research Skills**

Academic research is a specific type of research, which involves detailed and methodical investigation and critical analysis, usually in response to a specific area of study. It also means studying previous research related to your subject of interest to obtain facts, gain insight and see how your study fits into existing research. Usually, academic research requires a lot of reading and a certain kind of discipline to remain objective and always adhere to the truth. The aim of academic research is to acquire the knowledge you need so that you can say something with confidence and conviction about the subject in question. The method used to acquire the knowledge may differ, but the strict adherence to the truth is the foundation of what makes academic research important and the baseline of all advances made in our understanding of the world. Research into the world of physics, biology, economics, and culture translates into insights that have been a catalyst for changes in our society and discoveries that improved our quality of life. The fundamental purpose of academic research is the development of knowledge. The point is you simply cannot succeed in school without some keen research skills.

► **The Business World Needs Good Researchers**

The business world is broadly informed by academic research. Businesses use research to understand markets and make profitable decisions; trained professionals rely on academic research to make products and services safe and reliable. Ultimately, businesses have different motivations than academic scholars. Businesses have immediate needs. They require their employees to gather information to find an answer to a question or a solution to a problem.

Research skills are essential in the workplace because they help an organization improve what it does. It is one of the most effective ways for an organization to understand customers, supply and demand in the market, their competitors, and make good decisions. How else can a company keep up with changes in their industry, satisfy customer needs, advance its product line or services, enhance customer service, or compete in their market? How else can an organization survive or excel? The bottom line is that employers value employees who have research skills. Following school, no matter what career path you choose your job will likely require you to have some research skills.

This article discusses the characteristics of good research, what research skills are, why they are important, and how you can use them throughout your career.

Criteria of Good Research?

There are three main purposes in research:

1. Exploratory - undertaken to study a questions or problem that has not been explored before.
2. Descriptive - focuses on expanding knowledge.
3. Explanatory – conducted to understand the impact of specific changes.

No matter the purpose, good research is unbiased and rigorous. Facts and logical reasoning are the basis of all good researches. Research is all about a thought, problem, or need that drives the research so it is aimed at reaching a solution that can be applied in the real world. Good researchers are scrupulous and accountable for their objectivity, diligence, and credibility. They adhere to certain principles that guide the research so the findings can be scrutinized, organized, evaluated and defined in such a way that it can be relied upon for sound decision making. Good research is also based on multiple perspectives rather than on the insights of one source.

CRITERIA OF GOOD RESEARCH



| Good research in business or academics share these characteristics:

Action-oriented: In other words, research should be aimed at reaching a solution leading to the implementation of its findings.

Empirical: This is evidence that is relevant, timely and accurate, and applicable to real situations. Although secondary sources can provide valuable information, researchers rely on data from primary sources or evidence collected by researchers through direct observation, experience, or experimentation. This is crucial because empirical data is considered objective, unbiased evidence.

Systematic: Research needs to be approached step-by-step in accordance with a well-defined set of rules. The systematic characteristic of the research does not rule out creative thinking but it certainly does reject the use of guessing and intuition in arriving at conclusions.

Clearly Defined: The fundamental core of research is the question. The question must be clear, concise and provides focus for investigation. It guides the strategy, all stages of inquiry, analysis, and reporting.

Ethical: Researchers practice values, such as honesty, objectivity, integrity, and accountability in their work. In scientific research these standards help protect the rights and dignity of research participants while ensuring that researchers follow standards of conduct.

Significant: This simply means the findings should be useful.

Unbiased: Bias causes false conclusions and is potentially misleading. Therefore, it is considered immoral and unethical to conduct biased research. Every researcher needs to be aware of the potential sources of bias and undertake all possible actions to reduce or minimize the deviation from the truth.

Logical: Because facts and logical reasoning are the basis of all researches, this implies that a researcher is guided by the rules of logical reasoning. Employing a structured procedure breaks larger problems into smaller ones, which are easier to understand. This can also make research more meaningful, especially if the research is to be used in the context of decision-making.

Replicable: This means that other researchers can test the findings of the research. This keeps researchers honest and can give readers confidence in research.

Rigorous: A researcher evaluates or finds the real or exact information for the problem-related question. Good research is meticulous in studying the whole – the possible drawbacks and shortcomings, not just a part of problem or part of the data that might fit with a solution. Research may start with certain critical assumptions, but if there are gaps, inaccuracies, or flaws in the findings, the research will be disregarded.

Generative: This is one of the valuable characteristics of research because answering one question leads to generating many other new questions.

Participatory: This means research involves

External Validity: Findings that can be applied within a larger population or in the real world have external validity.

Good research relies on accurate data and these aforementioned principles. These principles are what make ongoing research necessary and good researchers so valuable.

Apart from academic research and science there are several career paths that rely on good research and the aforementioned criteria. Research helps business leadership assess whether making an investment is worthwhile. It is through research that companies make decisions revolving around improving a company's productivity, developing new products, identifying customer needs, adapting new technologies, and detecting what the competition might be doing.

Skills Required to be Good at Research

In a nutshell, having research skills is finding the answers to questions and solutions to problems. Sounds easy, right? However, research is not just compiling facts. Specifically, research skills refer to the ability to locate reliable sources of new, appropriate and credible information and then to approach that information in a critical way. That is, to proficiently scrutinize, organize, evaluate and clarify the details to gain intelligence relevant to a particular topic and then to use, present, or illuminate the findings generated as a result.

Research actually involves several important proficiencies that are characteristic to both academic and business research. How do you evaluate your research skills?

- 1) Are you open towards new ideas, open-minded, objective, and motivated? Researchers have all four attributes. Research is not simply used to verify what the researcher may already think or know. Where answers are not obvious a researcher's job is to discover a solution or recognize what facts contribute to the solution. Therefore, a researcher must always be open to surprising or divergent data
- 2) Are you able to identify and use new tools or research techniques to obtain intelligence? As not all research is internet or client based, a researcher must be able to track competitors, design and carry out studies, surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Researchers also build prototypes, conduct experiments or consult government reports or empirical evidence.
- 3) Do you easily recognize when new lines of inquiry reveal themselves? Research often generates new questions or ideas which can lead to additional research.
- 4) Do you pay close attention to detail? A good researcher examines supporting records, identifies source documentation, or scrutinizes and understands what is contributed by others.
- 5) Are you good at taking notes and keeping track of all information sources? Good researchers are able to cite sources of primary evidence.
- 6) Are you methodical in analyzing information, absorbing it and filtering it for usefulness? A good researcher knows how to exercise caution about the quality or relevance of the information and also verify the integrity of information that will contribute something new and authoritative to the subject area.
- 7) Are you meticulous about accuracy?
- 8) Are you good at organizing the facts? Researchers not only evaluate facts they prioritize details along with relevant supporting arguments?
- 9) Do you have the patience to spend time reading, listening and observing to gather credible information? Research is a slow and laborious process and the direction of any type of research may change a number of times before the researcher feels confident about being on the right track. Therefore research involves an incredible focus and patience.

- 10) Do you consistently do the research and supporting work in a timely manner? Attention management and time management skills help researchers to:
- Break down the problem or project into manageable parts
 - Meet time-sensitive deadlines for each element
 - Set goals, plan, organize
- 11) Have you displayed capability in gathering intelligence and using it to form an effective solution or authoritative opinion?
- 12) How are your problem solving skills? Researchers often have to make sense of complex challenges or handle difficult situations. They must know how to break down questions or problems into more decisive parts, critically think about each element and determine an effective solution.
- 13) How well do you communicate? When it comes to research skills, it's not just about gathering data and making sense of it, but also about how a researcher explains it. Researchers have to effectively communicate their new findings and demonstrate value in a clear and concise manner. They are selective in choosing a presentation style or writing style that suits the type of research as well as the intended audience.
- 14) Are you willing and capable of assuming the responsibility of adhering to applicable policies and procedures during the investigation process? The fundamentals of research involves rules and procedures, code of conduct and ethics. Researchers are accountable for their objectivity, diligence, and credibility. When most people think of research ethics, they think about issues that arise when scientific research involves human or animal subjects. While these issues are indeed a key part of research ethics, there are also other issues about standards of research conduct that apply in business.

Good ethical research leads to effective collaboration and better outcomes. Employers need to trust the research. They rely on it to make decisions that affect their reputation, relationship with clients, and staying in business. When research is conducted on behalf of clients, the integrity of the business could be called into question and it could face legal liability if the research and intelligence is falsified, sloppy, misrepresented, crossed boundaries of non-disclosure, confidentiality, or plagiarized the work of others.

Sometimes researchers have to push through their boundaries of comfort or have the moral courage to face a difficult situation or not be discouraged due to the nature of the research problem or the non-cooperation of other participants in the study.

Research plays a key role in several industries and all these skills are in demand. With these skills and research ability you have an opportunity to shape the future, because research teaches us new things and helps us adapt and evolve.

We are all Researchers

We are all researchers, even if we do not know it. The internet and Google is a huge part of our lives. We search for deals, check pricing and compare rates. We seek out top-rated restaurants, the latest technology, sort through recipes. We can hone our basic skills into advanced research skills through enhancing the foundational skills noted above, and practice. Practice is one of the best ways to develop and hone research skills.

One of your primary aims in practicing your research skills should be to improve your critical and independent thinking to understand which sources are credible. Another goal is to search for information from various sources, which includes sources beyond the internet. You should always aim to identify the primary sources of authority and determine if you can locate new information to add your research. Online resources should be used for a broad search before diving into specifics and is a good place to locate other credible resources. Pay attention to bibliographies or other cited resources. Use libraries; check out their research guides. Consult encyclopedias, trade journals, history books. Learn about and from experts in whatever field of study you are pursuing; talk with them or read what they have written. Don't forget to verify what you learn. Also keep accurate notes on sources, so you can qualify your credibility if it is called into question.

► Practice Makes Perfect

When it comes to research, there is limitless knowledge out there for you to discover. Be curious; become informed about the world around you. Be observant, and aim for real understanding.

Here are some practice ideas that will lead to mastering your research skills:

- Practice research skills in everyday life. You can create small research projects for yourself to help you with a current life event. Be curious. Learn what questions to ask. Try asking questions that you can actually test. Your research could be about people, products, processes—whatever interests you.
- Choose to learn about something new every day and turn one of the topics into an in-depth research project. Start broad, then dive into the specifics. Verify the information.
- Plan a different vacation each month. Turn that into a research project. Research the best time of year to travel to a particular location in terms of weather or the ability to see featured attractions. Learn about the different activities, museums, or historical sites, the prices of hotels and transportation options.
- Pretend you are applying for a job, even if you are not keen on that type of work. After all, when you work for a company you may have to conduct research on a topic that is not very appealing. Research information about the different positions you see offered (responsibilities, educational requirements, trends or outlooks for the future). Learn about the individual companies that are hiring through their websites, news releases, or media reports. Make comparisons.

- Question your media sources and try to verify their claims. Check the sources of a news article and do your own research to learn more about a person or situation. Try to get to the bottom of a story or claim. Look for time-specific information, research the credibility of the author or reporter.
- Talk to strangers to practice your “user experience” interview research skills. What types of open-ended questions get strangers talking in the supermarket? Can you build a rapport? Practice your opening and closing style to see if it feels natural and puts your subject at ease. You might ask people why they choose one product over another. Observe their body language. How does it change throughout the conversation? Can you maintain professionalism? Are you avoiding bias? Try repeating the same series of questions with another person to gauge the differences. You could vary a question or two to test the questions themselves and learn something about your practices that will help you when it is time to conduct a real study.
- Engage with academic research in ways that are meaningful to you. You can start by identifying some of your most prominent opinions and beliefs. Write each idea out on a piece of paper in as much detail as you can. Find a credible source of academic research for each opinion. Determine how well your opinion holds up under closer scrutiny, or better yet, the scientific method. It can be very enlightening to learn that we might be wrong about something or encouraging to learn our opinions are in line with academic understanding.

Show what you know

Your research skills as a student and through practice will make you adept at the research required to land a job. The business world deems research as a necessity to make decisions and determine goals, navigate the opportunities and obstacles of the marketplace, along with maximizing the sales and profit of the business.

An organization values strengths and unique insights gained from a variety of research techniques, which enable them to understand their customer, make better decisions and reduce risks to increase their chances of success. Established businesses use research to determine whether they can succeed in a new geographic region. Organizations can use research results to assess competitors, select a marketing approach for a product, spot new trends, communicate with consumers, measure reputation or gauge departmental performance. Entrepreneurs can use research to accurately evaluate consumer demand and see how the competition is performing.

The evolution of technology is increasingly transforming research tools. However, research work performed by individuals remain steadfast and invaluable. When a prospective employer asks, “What do you know about us?” you can demonstrate your research skills by sharing what you learned about the issues and future of the industry or the strengths of the company itself, from its place in the market to how it interacts with its customers. The more you know about the more likely you are to impress the interviewers.

Tips for Becoming a Good Researcher

The best researchers share these tips:

- Describe the issue or problem that you are trying to answer it in your own words. State it as a clear goal. Identify the criteria for evaluating research resources. Use those as a guideline for determining the relevance of research findings.
- Start broad before you dive into the specifics. Research can be overwhelming when you are unsure where to start. A broad search may not be accurate, but it helps to get oriented to a topic while picking up some key points. Then you can zero in on the specifics of those key points.
- Verify information from several sources, print, electronic, human resources such as interviews or eye-witness testimony. When looking at a written resource, always check the date and look at its depth. Check if it includes a reference list, bibliography, and documented data. There are unreliable sources on the internet. You must be responsible and accountable for factual accuracy. That means you should not rely on online information as your only source. When judging the credibility of an article, it's important to always ask yourself who the target audience of the article is. Sometimes, sources have a specific goal in mind and it can create certain biases.
- Learn how to recognize a quality source. Keep track of the frequency with which a fact appears and who is credited as the authority. To determine a reliable source, you'll need to use your analytical and critical thinking skills. Check the credentials of the source. Is he or she an expert in the field? Take advantage of the library resources, or scholarly databases. The library has excellent research guides, access to specific and credible databases, and a variety of credible resources. Even if you are not a student many campus libraries are open to the community for research. They will even help you figure out new avenues of exploration. Though you may find bias, magazines and newspapers are also good sources or leads for new resources. Don't ignore encyclopedias, world fact books, science journals, or statistics gathered in a census.
- Be prepared and open to unexpected answers. Good research is not about picking and choosing your answers. A good investigator never limits her research strategy, but wants to probe deeply to develop the most accurate understanding from a realm of possibilities. You should not limit your research strategy to one method or search in only one direction or rely on a minimal resources. You might be surprised by what you will learn from clients or sources that do not think like you do. What your company wants or expects may be driven by different motivations from their customers.
- Stay organized. Update your files as you find resources. You want to be able to cite your references accurately and find them easily.
- Review your goals before making any conclusions about your research. List your findings from the most common to the least common, or the most relevant to the least important. Evaluate the list for its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that have been identified in your analysis. Look for gaps in the information, and consider doing additional inquiry if necessary. Review the results and consider how they are to be interpreted in light of your goals.

Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey

At Corro, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate the journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

Corro is not just a Work Space – Our Aim is Helping the Community Thrive through People Success