A majority of students today are unfamiliar with library research due to cuts in high school libraries and relative success at using Google and Wikipedia. Undergraduates will continue to use these same strategies until taught new skills to find and evaluate information. The solution to this challenge can be to use your research as a model for students. You can discuss and model your techniques for developing a research question, conducting a literature review, collecting data, and writing and presenting your findings. In addition, other important issues such as plagiarism, academic and professional ethics can be included. This method encourages students to see the "big picture" of academic research. It lifts the veil on how scholars build knowledge through research. Learn techniques to model your own research and assignment ideas to use in your courses.

Most first year students….
- are unfamiliar with academic research
- in high school, used a copy/paste method from Wikipedia and Google —and got an A on every paper
- have little disciplinary knowledge
- have trouble selecting a manageable topic for their assignment
- have never used a university library
- have never read a scholarly journal article
- do not know how to trace an idea or theory through the literature
- do not know how to find related works—settle for top in results list
- are building critical thinking skill and are unsure of how to analyze

Information what?
Information literacy is the ability to locate, evaluating and use information. It is a skill that is being directly taught less and less due to budget cuts and fewer school librarians and libraries. Your assumptions of what students already know may be very different from their real knowledge on using libraries and doing research for papers and assignments. Ask you students about their ability to find information—not just on Google. Students often overestimate their skill. Here are a few questions to start with:
- Have you ever used a university library?
- Do you know what peer review is?
- In the past, what sources have you used to find information for paper?
- How do you evaluate information before you use it in a paper?
- What is a paraphrase? What is a summary? What is a quote?
- Do you need to cite information you find on the Internet?
- What is plagiarism?

Where are your students on the continuum of Information Literacy?

- Novice
- Advanced Beginner
- Competent
- Proficient
- Expert
What are your Learning Objectives?
Identifying learning objectives can be useful to pinpoint exactly what you want students to learn when assigning a research paper or research assignment. Even though students may have learned some search techniques in earlier classes, they often have difficulty applying them in different disciplines and often are not taught about disciplinary differences in how research is collected or disseminated. Here are a few example learning objectives:

After completing this assignment, a student will be able to:
- Identify keywords, synonyms and related terms for the information needed
- Locate five relevant scholarly articles related to thesis statement
- Understand how information is formally and informally produced, organized, and disseminated
- Define a realistic plan and timeline to complete research project
- Utilize library database(s) to find information for project
- Conduct a literature review
- Use appropriate documentation style to cite sources
- Demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and will not represent work attributable to others as his/her own
- Evaluate a source for authority, validity and timeliness
- Analyze the structure and logic of arguments using critical reading strategies
- Utilize archives for historical research
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information
- Access and use information ethically and legally

Assignment and Assessment Ideas
- Ask a fellow instructor to give a short talk on his/her research and writing
- Assign interviews with an instructor or graduate student on academic research and writing
- Have students diagram the research process
- Ask students to reflect on how they will apply this insight to their own research projects
- Have students keep a research and writing journal or blog
- Scaffold large research and writing assignments with multiple due dates to keep students on track with the Assignment Calculator

Try the Assignment Calculator *New Beta* (https://tools.lib.umn.edu/ac/)
The Assignment Calculator is a tool that breaks down research and writing projects into manageable steps based on the due date. You can adapt your own assignment from a bank of existing assignments (e.g. research paper, speech or video) or create your own from scratch. Use the Calculator to provide students with reasonable deadlines, specific instructions, and guidance for each step of your assignment.

Sources and Further Reading