At first your research will be a broad scan of the topic to see what aspect of it might be most interesting. This stage of research is like walking into a room full of people talking about a topic you’re exploring. It’s a babble of voices, and at first it is a bit overwhelming. As you move through the room, you overhear something interesting and pause to listen. After overhearing several bits of conversation, one discussion really grabs your attention, so you join the group, listen to various perspectives, and weigh in with your own thoughts. Throughout the process, you will be looking for information, but your search with grow more focused and purposeful over time.
Research Process Phase 1:

• **Find the issue**

• Useful sources:
  – Encyclopedia articles
  – CQ Researcher articles
  – Short magazine and newspaper articles (informative or persuasive)
  – Websites like publicagenda.org

• Since these sources are helping you locate the arguable issue, they may not end up in your paper—but still helped you!
Research Process Phase 1:

• Phrase the issue in the form of a research question.

• Should we increase the minimum wage?
Why a question?

- A research question can help to focus a broad topic:
  - Topic: Vegetarianism
  - Possible questions:
    - Is a vegetarian diet more environmentally friendly than a meat-based diet?
    - Is a vegetarian diet healthier than a meat-based diet?
Why a question?

• A research question can help to determine if you are headed toward an *argument* paper rather than an *informative* paper. Compare the questions on the last screen to these:
  – What is the history of vegetarianism?
  – What reasons do people have for choosing to be vegetarian?
Why a question?

• A research question can help keep you open-minded. Compare:
  – Vegetarianism is the better choice.
  – Should everyone be a vegetarian?
  – Raising the minimum wage is a bad idea.
  – Will raising the minimum wage do more harm or good?
Make sure your question is open-ended and neutrally-worded.

• Consider:
  – Why should everyone be a vegetarian?
  – Why are vegetarians so obnoxious about it?
Research Process Phase 2:

• **Find the arguments**

• Useful sources:
  – Persuasive articles in newspapers, magazines, or on the web.
  – Including sources referred to in Phase 1 sources!

• These sources are likely to end up in your paper—but remember not to put too much weight on them unless they carry some authority.
Research Process Phase 3:

• **Find and assess the evidence**

• Useful sources:
  
  – Quality books, especially by experts in the field
  
  – Journal articles (abstracts are OK)
  
  – Magazine, newspaper, or web sources that have some credibility and are informative rather than persuasive. (Try to follow the trail of secondary sources, however.)
  
  – Including sources referred to in Phase 1 and 2 sources!

• **These sources are likely to provide most of the support for points you will make in your paper.**
For more overview of the research process, see *Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age*, pages 2-12