Are you ready to research?

Use this checklist as a starting point for your historical research project, and find out whether you’ve overlooked an important step in your approach. This list can also be used to evaluate the research systems and methods that you already use.

- **Define the objective.** A clear purpose gives structure to the investigation, and sets a course for the research to follow.
- **Consider the end product.** How you envision the final results will affect your decisions about materials and methods.
- **Set limits.** Use firm deadlines and budgets avoid overextending yourself.
- **Understand the context.** Before you investigate a subject, learn what life was like in the time and place where the history happened. Your main research will have more meaning.
- **Know where to look.** Create a list of potential resources. Ask yourself who else would have an interest in your research subject. Look on the Internet and in the local phonebook.
- **Ask for resource suggestions.** Add to the resources you've located on your own. Ask librarians and local experts for their recommendations.
- **Get organized.** Create a system for keeping your research material organized and accessible. Expect to need more storage space as your investigation progresses.
- **Remember what you are doing.** Use a logbook or diary to document every activity in your investigation. Don’t rely on a good memory.
- **Do it right.** Put in the necessary effort. What comes out of your research project is a direct result of what you put into it.
- **Consider the quality.** The best and most reliable information always comes from primary sources. Only turn to secondary sources when it’s absolutely necessary.
- **Keep in touch.** Create a complete list of every contact that you make during your research. Include a note that will help your remember why you thought this person was important.