

Your Name

JOUR 302: Infomania

Discussion Professor's Name

Due Date

Research Brief 5: Your Best Self

Topic

In this assignment, you will demonstrate what you have learned in this course, while doing research on a topic you choose. Your goals are to: (1) find information on your topic using a variety of sources, (2) describe and evaluate how you searched for and found this information, (3) identify and evaluate the sources you found, and (4) summarize this information.

Step-by-Step Instructions for this Assignment

Identify a topic you want to research and get it approved by your discussion instructor.

Your discussion instructor can limit the range of the topics you can research, so pay attention to what your instructor says about this. Otherwise, your topic can be an issue, a business, a product or service, a trend, a person or group, or anything else you feel the need to learn about. Your topic needs to be different from all of the topics you and your friends researched this semester.

Search for information about your topic. Below is a list of source types we have used in this course. You will use at least five source types from this list. For each source type, you will find at least two information sources, and as many as you need to be well informed.

Source types:

- Public records
- News
- Data
- Market research
- Nonprofit trade or professional associations
- Public company disclosures
- Social media listening

In addition to completing all the steps you completed in prior assignments, in this assignment you will show off what you learned this semester about searching, evaluating, and summarizing information.

This means that at the beginning of each section, you will list and explain the skills you learned this semester that belong in this section, and then show examples of how you apply these skills to searching, evaluating, and summarizing information about your topic.

Section 1: Search Strategies and Results

First, list the search and note-keeping skills you learned this semester, **and list the new sources of information** you learned about. Explain what each of these skills and information sources means. As you write about your searches below, refer back to this list to demonstrate how you apply these skills in the search process.

In a short paragraph, **introduce your topic and explain why** you are devoting your final research brief to it.

Use bullet points or numbers to **list all of the searches** you performed, and to **fully explain your thinking** behind each search.

As you list each search:

- Identify the collection of sources you searched (e.g., Google), and the search term you typed into the search box.
- Briefly explain your thinking about why you used this collection and this search term. If your thinking is related to the results of a previous search, explain this connection.
- Briefly explain the results of each search, which results you pursued further, which you didn't, and why.

At the end of this section, write a **one-paragraph reflection** about all the searches you completed, and all the information you found. Evaluate the effectiveness of your search strategies and results. Support your evaluation with specific evidence from the list of searches and results. This is a critical thinking class. Show some critical thinking about what you did, why you did it, whether or not it worked, and what you learned in the process.

Section 2: Source Evaluation

First, list the evaluation skills you learned this semester and **explain** what each skill entails. As you write about your evaluations below, refer back to this list to demonstrate how you apply these skills in the evaluation process.

Use bullet points or numbers to **list all of the sources** your searches turned up, and to **fully explain your evaluation** of each source.

As you list **each source**, attribute it:

- Provide enough information so that anyone can find the source and look at it.
- Embed a link to every publicly accessible online source (avoid pasting unreadable URLs). Include a screenshot or a photograph of each source that can't be linked to online.

Evaluate **each source**:

- Your ultimate goal is to explain whether or not each source is credible enough for you to use in a report on the product, service or brand you researched.
- Use the evaluation information you generated earlier to explain and support your thinking (see "Source Evaluation Steps," above). Your explanation needs to include these parts:
 - An explanation about whether the source is primary or secondary, evidence supporting this, and a statement about whether this contributes to or diminishes the source's credibility.
 - A list of all of the credibility cues for this source.
 - Evidence about each cue, including any necessary quotations, embedded links, screenshots, etc.
 - An explanation about whether, based on this evidence, the cue contributes to or diminishes the credibility of the source.
 - A synthesis statement about each source that re-states the key evidence presented above. This statement should start with the phrase, "Overall, this source is / is not credible enough for me to use because"

Instead of writing in paragraphs, for each source you can (but don't have to) use a table like this:

Source: Insert the name of the source here, and embed a link to it.

Cue	Evidence	Contributes to (+) or diminishes (-) the source's credibility
Primary/secondary	Evidence about primary/secondary	+ / -
Cue 1 name	Evidence about cue 1	+ / -
Cue 2 name	Evidence about cue 2	+ / -
Cue 3 name	Evidence about cue 3	+ / -
	DO NOT stop at 3 cues. Add a new row for each additional cue (right-click and press "Insert" and "Rows Below")	

Synthesis statement: Overall, this source is / is not credible enough to use because ...
[synthesize the key evidence and arguments from the table]

Section 3: Research Brief

First, list the summary and attribution skills you learned this semester and **explain** what each skill means. As you write your summary below, refer back to this list to demonstrate how you apply these skills in the summary section.

Summarize the most important and interesting information you found on your topic.

The summary should tell a story. Start with the most interesting details and save the less interesting stuff for later.

Your writing should be thorough and clear but not excessively detailed.

Your summary should contain the facts you found in your research, not your opinion or information about how you did your searches. **DO NOT** use "I" and "my" in the summary.

Attribute all information to the appropriate sources in the summary. Use the phrase "according to" as much as you need to; do not worry about sounding redundant. **Embed links** to sources that are openly accessible on the Internet.

Remember that in journalism, paragraphs are short, usually no more than four sentences long. There is no limit on how many paragraphs you write.

How to Handle and Submit this Assignment

- Save this document to your computer.
- At the top of this page, change "Your Name," "Discussion Professor's Name" and "Due Date." The "Topic" is your product, service, or brand. Get rid of the yellow highlighting.
- Save the document periodically so you do not lose your work.
- As you complete the assignment, refer to the grading rubric on Blackboard to understand how the assignment will be graded.
- Delete all sections of the document that are in blue (like this one). All text in the final document should be black.

- When finished, click on the appropriate assignment in Blackboard and upload this document using the “Attach File: Browse My Computer” button.
- Submit a Word file. **Don’t submit a PDF file. Don’t submit a Pages file.** If you use Pages, save your file as a Word document before uploading. If you upload a Pages document, your instructor will not be able to read it or grade it.
- Make sure that the assignment uploads completely. Your Internet connection and Blackboard can malfunction during the submission process. It is **your responsibility** that your assignment upload is successful.
- Go back and check that your assignment is submitted. Take a screenshot to document that your assignment was fully submitted before the deadline. Save the screenshot to your computer.

BE CREDIBLE: do not fabricate or plagiarize. The consequences are not worth it.