

Stage 2: Brainstorm Concepts. At this point, you have a strong understanding of the contextual and historical components of the topic along with the specific arguments that are vital to discussing it. However, you may have overlooked some arguments that you need to research. To determine what is missing, you should review your general material and then brainstorm with teammates to find potential specific arguments that you may have missed. Finally, you must think of alternative key words to use when researching library catalogs, databases, and the Internet. For example, some people say the “death penalty” while others refer to “capital punishment.” Using both phrases in a search will yield similar results, but if you only use one phrase, you might miss a fair amount of material.

Stage 3: Accumulate Research on Specific Issues. Once you have organized your specific issues, noticed any important missing elements, brainstormed other vital arguments, and discovered alternate key words, you can research them. Below we discuss below the different source material available to conduct both general and specific research. At this stage, you should list all the citations to conduct your specific research from the various sources at your disposal—books, almanacs, journals, newspapers, etc. You will want to be as thorough as possible to ensure that you cover all the vital specific arguments.

Stage 4: Review and Research Footnotes and Bibliographies. Finally, you need to review and research all of the footnotes and bibliographies from the general knowledge stages. Such review is necessary because you may have already found material listed in footnotes and bibliographies in your previous research. After you have reviewed and compared the citations in the footnotes and bibliographies to the material you have already obtained, you should be able to determine if important arguments or sources from the footnotes and bibliographies still need to be researched. This stage is relatively straightforward and simple, yet the information gained can be extremely significant and productive.

RESEARCHING FROM SOURCE MATERIAL

Attempting to locate knowledge or evidence from source material can be both rewarding and frustrating. When you discover general information that helps contextualize your topic or when you locate specific information to support a vital argument about the topic, then researching from source material can be fulfilling and even fun. However, when you encounter difficulties in locating knowledge or evidence, research can be riddled with anxiety and disappointment. Knowing how to research each type of source material can reduce the frustration and help ensure a rewarding experience.

REFERENCE WORKS

Most libraries have specific reference sections that include general and specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias, atlases, almanacs, etc. *The World Almanac*, *World Factbook*, and *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, which are often useful to debaters, may be located here. Reference materials are useful as an initial place to get an overview of a topic. Many of these works also provide important bibliographies or citations that can lead you to more specific informa-