1. Get your ideas together and on paper.

   What is my assignment?

   How many pages/words do I need for this assignment?

   What kinds of sources can I use? (journal articles? books? newspapers? websites?)

   Am I looking for discussions that take sides (persuasive), or discussions that explain (informative), or both?

2. Get some keywords started.

   Useful words from the assignment question:

   Keywords that seem useful and related to my topic:
   Check Google / Wikipedia for inspiration.
   Consider synonyms, words used by experts in the field, places, dates, people who may be involved with the topic = famous people or certain populations of people.
Let’s do some research!

3. Choose a database
If you’re unsure, try Academic Search Complete to begin:
csulb.edu > Menu > MyCSULB > Single Sign-On (SSO) > Beach ID & PW > Library Button > Databases A-Z >
Academic Search Complete

3a. Enter one or several search terms in the boxes.
   Remember that “AND” makes your search more specific, “OR” makes it wider.
   Remember to be careful in some databases to separate out your keywords into more than one search box.

3b. Use the Limiters, like Subjects and Date, to help narrow down your results before looking through a huge list.

ASK YOURSELF:
What kinds of results am I getting? Is the information persuasive? Informative?
What keywords seem to be working best?
What Subject terms (from the limiters and within each result) can I try?

Note the successful search terms here:

4. Try the successful search terms in OneSearch (our big CSULB library search box)
4a. Use the Limiters on the search’s dropdown, and on the side, to help narrow down your results before looking through a huge list.

ASK YOURSELF:
What kinds of results am I getting?
What keywords seem to be working best?

5. Try the successful search terms in Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)
5a. Use the Limiters on the side to narrow the date - try for the most current (this year back to the last 2-3 years.)

ASK YOURSELF:
What kinds of results am I getting?
What keywords seem to be working best?

Keep all of these tabs open to go back and forth. Keep a record of the most successful search terms, and download articles when you can. It’s also good to keep a Word Doc open to collect your citation information as you go along. You can edit this Doc later to correct errors and match your essay style.
Evaluate what you have found!

For each source you think may be useful for the assignment, ask yourself questions like these and make notes about the answer to keep track of your progress and intention:

- Who are the authors of the works I have chosen? (Including websites, if any.) What is their expertise?

- Who is the intended audience of each work? How can I tell?

- What is the purpose of the work I have found? What does each one want to do/tell its reader?

- How does the work help my discussion idea? What part of my paper does it support?

Research takes patience and time. If you give yourself the space and time to think through your research as well as the works you choose, you will have a much easier time writing your assignment because you will be more clear about your intention and your evidence.