

Name _____

Date _____

ALERT: Researching the World Around You

Being alert is being fully awake. It is the opposite of being drowsy or dull. Doctors say persons are alert when they are fully aware of their environment: when they know where they are, when it is, what is happening, what things mean.

You can become more alert by using the ALERT process. It has five parts: ASKING questions and wondering about things; LISTENING in various ways for answers, partly by reading what others have said; EXPLORING to extend your knowledge, maybe by visiting places or interviewing people; REFLECTING on what you have learned and discussing it with others; and TRANSFORMING your discoveries into a new contribution to what we know by writing or creating something original.

Knowledge is built, a little here and a little there, by steady effort. Good researchers find themselves becoming more and more alert as they learn, which means they are seeing more and experiencing it more deeply. Being more alert is being more alive.

Ask: What would you like to understand better? What questions do you need to ask to get started? Who might help you with your research? Who might be helped by it?

Listen: Where can you find information? What books or magazine articles might you read? Where can you look for unpublished sources?

Explore: What experiments might shed light on some of your questions? What careful observations might be useful? What experts can you interview?

Reflect: What activities will you do to help you think deeply and carefully about what you are finding out? Some scientists use journals, and many plan careful discussions with peers.

Transform: What will write or create as a gift to your community, as a work of scholarship worthy of being preserved? A paper? A web page? A presentation? A display? A radio show?

You will go through all these processes several times as you make progress on your project. We learn things bit by bit, here a little and there a little, and as we learn new things we find new questions, new sources of information, and new ideas for works of permanent value.