

How to research

Created by Inaburra Senior Library, 2017

1. What are you looking for?

Before you start looking for information you need to understand what to look for.

Read the assignment question...

Highlight the keywords. If there are any words you don't know, find out what they mean. If there's anything you don't understand, ask your teacher.

What sort of information do you need?

Graphs? Basic facts? In-depth analysis? Statistics? Maps?

Do some background reading

This will give you an overview of the topic. Make a note of keywords that you can use when you're searching.

Wikipedia is a good place to go for background information, but it's not a good idea to use it as a source because you don't know whether it was written by an expert or not.

2. Where will you find it?

Are there any sources of information that will be particularly good for this topic?

If your teachers, Miss Hewson or the library have pointed you towards a particular source, use it! They've suggested it to you because it's good for this topic.

Check the assignment help section of the library website. If your assignment isn't there, speak to Miss Hewson in the Learning Commons.

There might be some resources that will have the best information on this topic, or that you are required to use. Think about where you will find them. (eg. books, newspapers, videos)

3. Finding the information

Now you know what you're looking for, you can start searching for it.

Read the 'Googling well' graphic for your year.

Evaluate evaluate evaluate!

Anyone can publish information on the internet, whether they're an expert or whether they know nothing about the topic. Don't just assume the information you're using is correct, you need to evaluate any sources you find to be sure that they're trustworthy.

If you don't know how to do that... read the 'Evaluating a website' graphic.

Here's a quick reminder:

- Currency
- Relevancy
- Authority
- Accuracy
- Purpose
- .edu, .gov
- Does the information agree with the information you've found in other sources?

When you find a useful source, make a note of the bibliographic details. This will save you having to find it again later when you do your bibliography.

4. Stop and check

After you've found some information you need to stop and have a look at what you've found.

Look at your information and ask...

- Do you have enough information?
- Are there any gaps to fill?
- Re-read the assignment question. Does the information you've found answer your question?
- Do you have duplicate or unnecessary information that you can leave out?

5. Using your information

Now it's time to use the information to complete your assignment.

What does your task require you to do with the information? Make sure you're doing what you need to do.

Avoid plagiarism!

Plagiarism is when you take someone else's words and ideas without giving them credit. It's very serious because it's stealing, and it stops you from learning because you won't understand the information you're plagiarising.

How to avoid it:

- Take notes from your sources and put them into your own words.
- Make sure you understand the information you're using- if you can explain it to someone else, that's a good way to check that you understand it.
- Understand the difference between common knowledge and expert knowledge.
 - Common knowledge = facts that are widely accepted. You don't need to give credit for these.
 - Expert knowledge = knowledge that only an expert would know. You do need to give credit for this.

6. Bibliography

Once you've done your assignment you'll need to do a bibliography, which is a list of the sources you used.

You will need to format your bibliography a certain way. Your teacher will tell you what they want.

You can use the SLASA generator

This is a quick and easy way to create a bibliography. Read the page on using the SLASA generator.

When you copy and paste your references into your bibliography, organise them alphabetically by the author's surname. If a source doesn't have an author, place it alphabetically by the name of the source.