



Carrying Out Research - A Students Guide

When Should I Begin My Research?

Be sure to begin your research as soon as the work is set. This will allow time to sort through the resources or to consult with a librarian or tutor if you need assistance.



Get an Overview

Firstly, think about your purpose. Do you have any prior knowledge of the topic? Can you break the question or assignment into parts?

Tip: Make a list of 4 or 5 questions you want answers to and reject information that doesn't help answer them. Keep your searching focused and ask for help if you get stuck.

Reading

Look at the title, headings, lead an end paragraphs to get an overview of the piece. You need to work out what ideas, problems and questions are being discussed.

Tip: You may find that by reading the first sentence of each paragraph you will find your answer. Sometimes you'll have to read each paragraph carefully in order to find the focus or main idea buried in it.

This preliminary search will help you determine how little or how much information is available on your topic. If you're new to research, select the best two or three sources and forget the rest. You can always come back for more.

You can try blanking out some of the material with a sheet of paper, to focus your attention.

Tip: Work from the general to the specific. Find background information first, then use more specific and recent sources.

Use post-it notes rather than highlighter pens to mark text, so that you can change your mind later.



Make notes on anything you are not clear about then you can ask at a lesson. You need to keep accurate records of where you have been and what you have collected to date.

Making notes that include major points of the books and journal articles will **save time and effort because all the materials will be organized.**



Thinking About Resources

Before searching for information, look at the requirements for your assignment and answer the following questions:

- Does your tutor specify the number of resources you need? If not, a good standard is to have one resource for every page required. E.g. three resources for a three page assignment
- Are you required to use certain types of resources? E.g. a combination of books, journals, and newspapers?
- Are you required to use current resources? E.g. articles or books that are less than ten years old?

Internet Research

Keeping your purpose in mind is especially important when using the web and/or CD ROMs; there is always another tempting link to follow and you could end up wasting a lot of time.

- Use Search Engines such as Google.co.uk and other search tools as a starting point.
- Pay attention to domain name extensions, e.g., .edu (educational institution), .gov (government), or .org (non-profit organization). These sites represent institutions and tend to be more reliable, but watch for possible political bias in some government sites.
- Be selective of .com (commercial) sites. Many .com sites are excellent; however, a number of them contain advertisements for products and nothing else.
- Be wary of the millions of personal home pages on the Net. The quality of these vary greatly.

Tip: Bookmark your favourite Internet sites and take notes of relevant information.

Check out online resources such as:

- MagPortal.com, OnlineNewspapers.com
- Magazines and Journals (E.g. Time, National Geographic, Newsweek, etc.)

Tip: Remember to save your research as you go along. It may even come in useful again

