

How to Do Library Research



This tutorial will show you how to find books, articles, and reliable websites to provide evidence for research papers and projects.

We will be using the resources of the Redlands Community College Learning Resources Center.

If you are off-campus, you must have your Redlands student I.D. number in order to log in to access these resources. If you do not know your I.D. number, please contact the library at (405) 422-1254 before beginning this tutorial.

Overview of the Research Process



- **Step 1:** Define your research topic and focus it to fit the requirements of your assignment.
- **Step 2:** Do background reading on your topic so you are familiar with the issues surrounding it (including historical development).
- **Step 3:** Brainstorm different keywords you can use to search for information on your topic.
- **Step 4:** Search for a variety of information sources on your topic.
- **Step 5:** Evaluate the information you find for relevancy, accuracy, currency, and objectivity.
- **Step 6:** Use the information to support your thesis, giving credit to the authors of all sources.
- **Step 7:** Document your sources correctly according to the style specified in your assignment.

Off-Campus Log-In Instructions



- If you are taking this tutorial on campus, you may skip this slide.
- If you are off-campus, please click on the following link:
[Off-Campus Library Access](#)
- Enter your full Redlands student I.D. number (without the dash) in the Patron/Alternate I.D. box
- Enter the PIN 1234
- Click “Submit Request” (If you get an error message, please call the library at 405-422-1254)
- Now you will be able to access all library resources without entering any more passwords.
- Keep the off-campus access page open during the rest of this tutorial.



Step 1

Define your research topic and focus it to fit the requirements of your assignment.

- Your professor may have given you a list of topics, or you may have to come up with one on your own.
- Choose a topic that interests you.
- If you are looking for a current issue, try browsing the [SIRS Issues Researcher](#) database.
- The index or glossary of your textbook is another good source of topic ideas.
- Decide what aspect of your topic you want to explore.
- Try to express your topic in a question that can be answered in the number of pages required for your assignment.

Example: Choosing and Focusing a Topic



- **Topic:** Video games
- **Narrowed Topic:** Video games and students
- **Research Question:** Do video games enhance learning for students?

Ways to Further Narrow Your Topic:

Place

- United States
- Oklahoma

Population

- Generation X
- Males

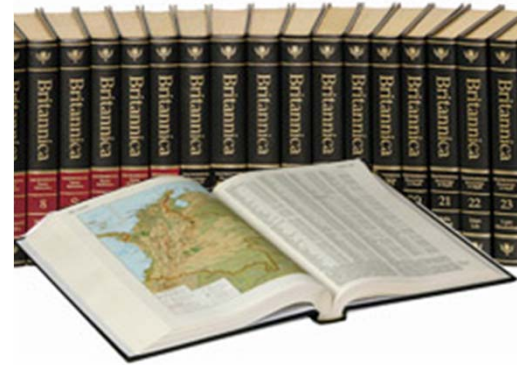
Time Period

- In the last year
- During the 1990's



Step 2

Do background reading on your topic so you are familiar with the issues surrounding it (including historical development).



- Start with encyclopedias, which give a concise overview of many topics.
- Wikipedia is not a bad starting place for general information on a topic, but keep in mind that most professors do not allow you to cite Wikipedia because anyone can edit or change it.
- There are many subject-specific encyclopedias which go into more detail than Britannica.
- As you read, you may decide to revise your research question; that's perfectly okay at this stage.

How Do I Find Encyclopedias?



- To find out which encyclopedias the Redlands library carries, search the [LRC Catalog](#) using the keyword *encyclopedia*, or browse the library's reference section.
- The LRC subscribes to a database called [Credo Reference](#), which contains electronic entries from hundreds of specialized encyclopedias.



The library also subscribes to a number of eBook encyclopedias through [EBSCO](#) and [ebrary](#). (Off-campus students, use your off-campus library page to access these eBooks.) Search these collections for encyclopedias pertaining to your topic.

- Finally, there are a number of good online encyclopedias. Try the [Librarian's Index to the Internet](#) to find a list of librarian-recommended sites. Remember, Wikipedia is generally not considered to be a reliable source.



Step 3

Brainstorm different keywords you can use to search for information on your topic.

- As you do your background reading, jot down keywords and related terms that you come across.
- Use a [thesaurus](#) to find more synonyms for your topic.
- Ask someone else (your friends or your professor or a librarian) to look at your list and see if they can think of any related terms you might have overlooked.

- **Keywords for our example:**

video games

gaming

learning

education

virtual reality

students

curriculum

academic

technology



STOP!



Questions to ask yourself at this point:

- **Do I have a manageable topic?**

Can you address this topic in the number of pages required for the assignment? If not, you need to go back and refine (narrow or broaden) your topic.

- **Do I still care about this topic?**

From here on out, you should be committed to sticking with this topic until the paper or project is finished.

- **How will I approach this topic?** (this may be pre-determined by the nature of your assignment)

The Informational Approach -- Just the Facts

Present and discuss information, facts, statistics, people, places, issues, events about your topic based on your research.

The Argumentative Approach -- Your Position

Identify and debate the pros & cons of an issue or examine the advantages & disadvantages of a particular aspect. State and argue your position based on your research.

The Problem-and-Solution Approach

Explain and analyze a problem, and propose a solution based on your research.



Step 4

Search for a variety of information sources on your topic.

- Search the [LRC Catalog](#) for books, periodicals, videos, and other print resources in the Redlands library.
- Write down the call number for each resource and ask a librarian if you need help finding them.

Library Tip

Call numbers are also known as Dewey Decimal numbers. They indicate where to find a book on the shelf and look like this:

946.3	F	92
Rob	Kin	Ada

- Be sure to use each of your keywords to make sure you haven't missed any resources.
- Use the indexes and tables of contents in books to identify the portion relevant to your topic (you don't have to read the whole book to be able to use it for your research).

Search Strategies



- You can't expect to type one search term into one search box and find all the sources you need. In fact, the word "research" means "to search again." You will need to search using multiple keywords in many different databases and search engines.
- Make sure to search on all the keywords and related terms you came up with in Step 3.
- Use "advanced search" options which allow you to combine terms for more targeted searches.
- You can create more precise searches if you use phrases. Remember to enclose phrases in quotation marks.
- Browse a Web directory, such as [The Environment Directory](#), which organizes pages by subject. Start with a general category and choose increasingly more specific sub-categories.



Step 4, Cont.

Search for a variety of information sources on your topic.

- Search the [LRC databases](#) for articles on your topic. Our databases allow you to access articles from magazines, newspapers, and journals from any Internet-connected computer. Your topic and the kind of article you need will determine which of our databases you should search:
 - **SIRS Issues Researcher** – current issues topics
 - **SIRS Renaissance** – humanities topics
 - **EBSCO** – articles from popular to scholarly on a wide variety of topics (see next slide for a comparison of different types of articles)
 - **Biological & Agricultural Index Plus** – agriculture, nursing, biology, veterinary medicine, environmental science, etc.
- We often have trials to other databases, and occasionally add new ones, so check back often!

Is it Popular, Scholarly, or Somewhere in Between?



Magazines

- Written by a journalist or layperson
- Intended for the general public
- Often have a glossy, bright look
- Edited by general editors of the magazine
- Published frequently (weekly)
- Short articles
- Language aimed at laypersons
- Contain many advertisements
- Usually no references
- Example: Newsweek

Trade Journals

- Written by a practitioner in the field
- Intended for a particular trade or profession
- Published frequently (monthly or bi-monthly)
- Short articles
- Technical language geared to the field
- May contain advertisements
- Usually no references
- Example: AJN

Journals

- Written by an expert, scholar, or educator
- Intended for scholars and researchers
- Unadorned look
- Edited by scholars or peer reviewers
- Published less frequently (quarterly)
- Articles tend to be much longer
- Technical language geared to field
- Contain few, if any advertisements
- Usually include references
- Example: Journal of Microbiology

Other Types of Articles

Newspapers: Considered popular, written by journalists for a general audience, focused on presenting facts, no references

Blog Posts: Can be written by anyone, intended for a general or specific audience, written for online publication only



Step 4, Cont.

Search for a variety of information sources on your topic.

- Search for eBooks (full-text electronic books that you can read entirely on the computer) using the LRC's two collections of eBooks, [netLibrary](#) and [ebrary](#).
- You may wish to do your own primary research by contacting an expert for an interview or conducting a survey. See next slide for a comparison of primary and secondary sources.
- If allowed by your professor, search the Web for sites with reliable information (generally sites with domain names ending in .edu, .gov, and .org). In our next step, we'll talk about evaluating the information you find online and in print sources.
- Don't forget media! Videos and audios can be rich sources of information for a paper or project.

Primary and Secondary Sources*



Primary sources are those that are closest to the actual event, time period, or individual in question. The information in primary sources has not been edited, interpreted, condensed, or evaluated. Primary sources also present original thinking and observations, such as the original research used to write journal articles reporting on original scientific studies, experiments, or observations.

Examples of primary sources:

- Memoirs, autobiographies, diaries
- Interviews with people
- Public records
- Transcripts of speeches
- Letters, e-mails, memos, and other correspondence
- Discussions and electronic discussions on the Internet
- Minutes from meetings
- Broadcasts reporting at the time of the event
- Surveys
- Government documents
- Artifacts
- Photographs and works of art
- Observations
- Patents
- Works of literature, such as fiction and poetry

Secondary sources are those that are removed from the primary source. Authors of secondary sources examine, interpret, or reflect on the primary source to restate or reuse the information. Secondary sources also act as pointers to the primary sources by referencing the original sources.

Examples of secondary sources:

- Books and textbooks
- Review articles from scholarly journals
- Conference papers and proceedings
- Theses and dissertations
- Handbooks
- Databases
- Magazine articles
- Newspaper articles that analyze events
- Dictionaries and encyclopedias
- Videotapes and audiotapes, CD-ROMs and DVDs

*Adapted from *100% Information Literacy Success* by Terry Taylor (Thomson Delmar Learning, 2007, pp. 38-40).



Step 5

Evaluate the information you find for relevancy, accuracy, currency, and objectivity.

- Not all information is created equal! Usually, print sources are more reliable because they have been through an editing process prior to being printed. However, information in print sources can become quickly out-of-date in today's ever-changing information society. Often, if we want current information, we turn to the Web.
- As you know, anyone can publish anything on the Internet, so if you want to use a website as a source, you must be willing to sort through and evaluate its content. Since it is easy to falsify information on the Internet, you should look closely at the Web sources you select. Use the questions on the next slide to help you evaluate information from any source, but especially from the Internet.
- Remember, it is important to evaluate both print and online sources of information. When you can, double check facts with another source to make sure they are accurate.

Checklist for Evaluating Information



- Does the author have the credentials or expertise to write on this topic?
- Is the author or publisher associated with an organization that has a known bias?
- Who is the audience for this source? Is it popular or scholarly?
- Is the information in this source up-to-date? Can you find more recent information in another source?
- Check how statistics and facts were collected. Is there documentation to indicate the source of the information?
- Does this source support your topic?



Step 6

Use the information to support your thesis, giving credit to the authors of all sources.

- Have a system to keep track of all the information you need for citing your sources: author, title, publisher, place and date of publication, volume and issue numbers, page numbers, URLs, dates accessed.
- When you have enough information to answer your research question, you are ready to start writing.
- Be sure to give proper credit (in notes or in-text citations) to the authors of all sources used in your paper, whether you quote directly or paraphrase. Failure to do so is **plagiarism**, which could result in a failing grade, academic suspension, or expulsion from the college.

How to Format In-Text Citations (MLA)



Direct quotation:

- “There is no evidence that video gaming impairs students’ ability to learn” (Brown 8).
- In a recent interview, John Brown said, “There is no evidence that video gaming impairs students’ ability to learn” (8).

Paraphrase:

- Students who play video games are just as able to learn as those who don’t (Brown 8).
- According to John Brown, students who play video games are just as able to learn as those who don’t (8).

For APA guidelines, please visit [Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab](#).



Step 7

Document your sources correctly according to the style specified in your assignment.

- Readers of your paper will want to know where you got your information. Therefore, it is essential that you provide a list of documentation (called Works Cited, References, or a Bibliography) at the end of your paper or project.
- Verify with your professor which style to follow – MLA, APA, or one of the lesser used styles.
- Follow the instructions on the Purdue University [Online Writing Lab](#) for formatting your paper, citations, and list of sources.

Congratulations!



YOU MADE IT THROUGH THE
RESEARCH PROCESS!



Please take the self-test on the next slide to see
how information literate you are.

Information Literacy Self-Test



Define the information need.

- I know when I need information and take steps to find it.
- I don't wait until the last minute to do research for an assignment.
- I do background reading so I'm familiar with the issues surrounding my topic.
- I know how to focus my topic into a question that can be answered in the number of pages required for my assignment.

Access information effectively.

- I use a variety of sources, not just the Web.
- I use the right search strategy for each type of resource.
- I know how to find keywords and related terms for my topic.
- I know the difference between a popular and a scholarly publication.
- I know when I have enough information to complete my assignment.

Evaluate information critically.

- I verify the accuracy of information with another source.
- I consider the author and publisher of each information source for possible bias.
- I look for the date information was created or updated to see if I need to look for a more current source.

Use information ethically.

- I use passwords appropriately to access library resources.
- I give credit to authors for using their work (I don't plagiarize).
- I use the proper style for my works cited or references page.

Use information to accomplish a specific purpose.

- I use my research to support my answer to the topic question.
- I follow the instructor's directions for presenting my paper or project.