Research Tips

*Start with a premise or claim (sometimes called an “argument” or “thesis”)

*Identify and use a variety of sources appropriate to your topic
  - Good researchers use a variety of search strategies
  - Different searches yield different results

*Collect information, build your knowledge, & refine your topic as you do your research
  - Identify key concepts and terms
  - Keep notes (especially subject and search words you have found useful)
  - Email citations to yourself (most online sources provide citation information)

*Evaluate each source for authority and perspective
  - Who was the author or creator?
  - Who was the publisher or producer?
  - How accurate is the information?
  - How current is the information?
  - What is the author/producer’s point of view?

For printed materials and most online databases provided by your library, much of this evaluation has been done for you.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS & DICTIONARIES

**BEST FOR:** basic facts and definitions; accepted knowledge and interpretations; background and context

- Use the CIA library’s webpage links to Oxford Art Online
- Don’t forget that the library’s reference collection contains many specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries!

BOOKS

**GOOD FOR:** broader understanding; in-depth analysis and contextual discussion; developing different perspectives on a topic

- Use the online catalog to look for books and exhibition catalogs
- Use both a SUBJECT search and a KEYWORD search
- Borrow books from OhioLINK

JOURNAL ARTICLES

**BEST AFTER YOU REFINE YOUR TOPIC:** useful for narrow or specialized topics; can provide more recent information than books; often highly focused interpretations

- Start with the Find Articles section of the library’s website
- Select the database most appropriate for your topic
- Use more than one database!

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

**BEST FOR:** current events and up-to-date news analysis

- Use Newspaper Source available through Ebscohost Databases
MULTIMEDIA

ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR: topics involving installation, performance, motion, film, video, sound, digital arts, or new media
  o You might try Rhizome

IMAGES

CAN: provide or convey information and help you illustrate your argument
  o Start with the Find Digital Images section of the library’s website
  o Each of the collections is a little different, so you may need to check several

WEBSITES

USE CAREFULLY: quick and easy access to a wealth of information, but remember ANYONE can create a website - so beware - some websites are worse than useless!

Anyone can create a website, write a web page, purchase a domain, and make it look sophisticated and informative. There is no evaluative process that filters what is posted on the web. Many websites are one-sided, significantly flawed, or even intentionally misleading. YOU will have to do the evaluation!

• These web addresses are reserved for use by these specific organizations: .edu = education .gov = government .mil = military
• Read the website’s home, about, FAQs, or philosophy section.
• Is the author, producer, or sponsor of the website clearly identified?
• Does the author, producer, sponsor have authority or recognized credentials?
• If strong opinions are expressed, be wary of the content!
• Is there an indication of when the page was created or last updated?
• Does the site provide additional links, footnotes, and references? Are they current?
• WHEN IN DOUBT, CONFIRM THE INFORMATION!

An expert researcher isn't one who can find information the first way that they search or the first place that they look; an expert researcher is someone who uses several approaches and is willing to follow the evidence as they discover it.

Need help?

Ask your professor or the library staff! Email referencehelp@cia.edu

cia.edu/library

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