

CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND USING RESEARCH TOOLS

Mapping out a research strategy

- There are tools that can be downloaded on the computers and used for calculation and interpretation of the data such as: EndNote, TURNITIN etc.
- One should pose questions on internet that are worth exploring.
- Then you can find articles through databases or indexes
- Similar is the case with finding books through a library catalog, finding Web sources and using other search tools hence, conducting field research



Important concerns while searching for data:

- Choose narrow and challenging questions
- What is your assignment?
- In which academic discipline are you writing?
- What is your tentative research question?
- How long will the paper be?
- How much time can you spend on the project?
- Search databases and techniques required
- Use quotation marks “gateway drug”.
- Use AND to connect words: hyperactivity AND children or a plus sign: hyperactivity + children.
- Use NOT in front of words that must not appear in a document: Persian Gulf NOT war. Or a minus sign (hyphen) instead: Persian Gulf -war
- Use OR if only one of the terms must appear in a document: “mountain lion” OR cougar
- Use an asterisk as a substitute for letters that might vary: “marine biolog*” (marine biology or biologist)
- Use parentheses to group a search expression and combine it with another: (standard OR student OR test*) AND reform.

Managing information and avoiding plagiarism: evaluating sources

Determining how sources support your purpose

- 100s of potential sources
- Assessing for quality sources
- Selecting sources worth your time and attention
- Annotating bibliographic entries
- Info to help you decide
- Scholarly vs popular sources

Decide on the following information

- Title and brief description (How relevant?)
- Date (How current?)
- Name of periodical (How scholarly?)
- Length (How extensive in coverage?)
- Additionally: The URL (domain) for example, .com, .edu, .gov, or .org

Scholarly vs popular

- COMMON FEATURES OF A SCHOLARLY SOURCE
- Formal presentation includes abstract and research methods
- Includes review of previous research studies
- Reports original research
- Includes references
- Often has multiple authors who are academics

Scholarly vs popular

- COMMON FEATURES OF A POPULAR SOURCE
- Often has a provocative title
- Author is typically a staff reporter, not an expert
- The bulk of the article presents anecdotes about the topic
- Presents a summary of research but no original research
- No consistent citation of sources

Managing information and avoiding plagiarism: reading critically

Read with an open mind and a critical eye

- Not necessarily judging an author's work harshly
- Examining its assumptions, assessing its evidence, and weighing its conclusions
- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources

- Be alert for signs of bias
- Assessing the author's argument
- Web sources: authorship, sponsorship, purpose and currency of the content

Checking for signs of bias

- Does the author or publisher endorse political or religious views that could affect objectivity?
- Is the author or publisher associated with a special-interest group, such as Greenpeace or the National Rifle Association, that might present only one side of an issue?
- Are alternative views presented and addressed? How fairly does the author treat opposing views? (See A3-c.)
- Does the author's language show signs of bias?

Assessing an argument

- What is the author's central claim or thesis?
- How does the author support this claim—with relevant and sufficient evidence or with just a few anecdotes or emotional examples?
- Are statistics consistent with those you encounter in other sources? Have they been used fairly? (It is possible to "lie" with statistics by using them selectively or by omitting details.) Does the author explain where the statistics come from?
- Are any of the author's assumptions questionable?
- Does the author consider opposing arguments and refute them persuasively? (See A3-c.)
- Does the author fall prey to any logical fallacies? (See A3-a.)

Maintaining a working bibliography

Effective researchers are good record keeper

- Record working bibliography
- Systematic ways to manage record
- Keeping track of your sources by keeping three copies:

- Email
- Save
- Print
- Keep track of source materials
- Highlight key passages
- Use color-coding
- Avoid plagiarism and the chances of unintentional plagiarism

Sample of annotated bibliography

Gonsalves, Chris. "Wasting Away on the Web." *eWeek.com*. Ziff Davis Enterprise Holdings, 8 Aug. 2005. Web. 16 Feb. 2009.

Summarize the source.

Annotations should be three to seven sentences long.

Interpret the relationship between this source and others in the bibliography.

In this editorial, Gonsalves considers the implications of several surveys, including one in which 61% of respondents said that their companies have the right to spy on them. The author agrees with this majority, claiming that it's fine if his company chooses to monitor him as long as the company discloses its monitoring practices. He argues that "the days of Internet freedom at work are

justifiably finished," adding that he would prefer not to know the extent of the surveillance. Gonsalves writes for *eWeek.com*, a publication focused on technology products. He presents himself as an employee who is comfortable with being monitored, but his job may be a source of bias. This editorial contradicts some of my other sources, which claim that employees want to know and should know all the details of their company's monitoring procedures.

Use quotations sparingly. Put quotation marks around any words from the source.

Evaluate the source for bias and relevance.

For an entire book

- All authors; any editors or translators
- Title and subtitle
- Edition (if not the first)
- Publication information: city, publisher, and date

For a periodical article

- All authors of the article
- Title and subtitle of the article
- Title of the magazine, journal, or newspaper
- Date; volume, issue, and page numbers

For a periodical article retrieved from a database (in addition to preceding information)

- Name of the database and an item number, if available
- Name of the subscription service
- URL of the subscription service (for an online database)
- Accession number or other number assigned by the database
- Digital object identifier (DOI), if there is one
- Date you retrieved the source

NOTE: Use particular care when printing or saving articles in PDF format. These files may not include some of the elements you need to properly cite the source. You may need to record additional information from the database or Web site where you retrieved the file.

For a Web source (including visuals)

- All authors, editors, or creators of the source
- Editor or compiler of the Web site, if there is one
- Title and subtitle of the source
- Title of the site
- Publication information for the source, if available
- Page or paragraph numbers, if any
- Date of online publication (or latest update)
- Sponsor of the site
- Date you accessed the source
- The site's URL

NOTE: For the exact bibliographic format to use in your working bibliography and in the final paper, see MLA-4b, APA-4b, or CMS-4c.

Avoiding plagiarism and taking notes

Avoid unintentional plagiarism (academic offence)

- Don't use the language of your source (unless quoting directly)
- Don't half copy
- Don't plug your synonyms
- Resist the temptation to relax
- Prepare your own notes
- Three ways to take notes:
- Summary + quote + paraphrase
- For all three use page number