STUDENTS' GUIDE TO RESEARCH

A FOUR-STEP PROCESS

The first step to research is to know where to start… your library!

STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR TOPIC

- Understand your assignment.
- Get an overview of your topic using general reference sources, such as textbooks, dictionaries and encyclopedias.
- List keywords for searches (e.g. names, places, people, dates, issues, ideas).

STEP 2: LOCATE THE RESOURCES

- Explore a variety of resources:
    - Books (you have access to a collection of e-books through the library catalogue)
    - Magazines, journals, newspapers – *Using Article Databases*, see page 3.
    - Internet
- Use your list of keywords in your searches
- Choose the best and most reliable sources - Ask your school librarian for help!

STEP 3: EVALUATE THE INFORMATION

- Review your resources, looking at:
    - Authority (author's expertise, reputable organization)
    - Point of view (bias)
    - Accuracy (verify the facts)
    - Dates (how current is it? Does currency matter?)
    - Relevance (does the information address your topic?)

STEP 4: DOCUMENT YOUR SOURCES

- When taking notes, photocopying, or printing, be sure to record:
    - Author
    - Title
    - Place of publication
    - Name of publisher
    - Page numbers used
    - Date of publishing
    - Last updated date (for websites)
    - URL (for websites)
- Use the MLA, APA, Chicago/Traditional bibliographic style guides available in your library to ensure proper format.

ASK YOURSELF:

- ✓ Have I formed an opinion about my topic?
- ✓ Is my opinion clear in my rough draft?
- ✓ Do I know which bibliographic style to use?
    - ✓ Have I cited all of the facts and ideas that are not my own?

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A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM & COPYRIGHT

PLAGIARISM

According to *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, to "plagiarize" means:

1. To steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own;
2. To use another's production without crediting the source;
3. To commit literary theft; and
4. To present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

Plagiarism can be avoided by:
1. Relating ideas in your own words or quotation marks, and then acknowledging that the material has been borrowed by using an in-text citation (see your teacher or librarian for help);
2. Providing your audience with the necessary information to find that source in your in text citation and bibliography.

Avoid plagiarizing as it can lead to failure!

COPYRIGHT

Copyright can be simply defined as "the right to copy". Copyright ensures the copyright holder the right to be credited for his/her work.

You may copy:
- Up to 10% of a published work;
- A whole chapter from a book, as long as that chapter is not more than 20% of the book;
- An entire single short story, play, essay or poem from a source;
- An entire article from a source;
- An entire entry from a reference work;
- An illustration or photograph.

Copying and the Internet:

Most material available on the Internet is protected by copyright. This includes the text (including email messages), images, photographs, music, video clips and computer software, even on information sharing sites. Under the *Canadian Copyright Act*, copying and using these materials in your own work is a violation of copyright. Again, to use any of these in your own work, you must have the permission of the owner.

For further information, please see:

http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/291/Copyright_Matters.pdf

Please see your Librarian for help if you need more information on plagiarism or copyright.

Prepared by the Secondary School Librarian Council, 2019

A GUIDE TO EVALUATING WEBSITES

You should consider the following evaluation criteria when deciding whether to use information found on websites for your research:

Purpose: Websites can have a variety of purposes. They can be educational, commercial, personal, etc. Check the ending of the URL, as that may indicate who is publishing it, and what its purpose is (i.e. .edu, .gov, .org).

Authority: Is the author's name given (Authors can be individuals or organizations)?   What are his or her credentials?   Are the authors clear about their intent and purpose? Is there an identifiable institution or organization listed? Can they be contacted if you have more questions?   Is there a bibliography or a list of citations given? A reliable website will cite its' sources.

Objectivity: Does the website reflect a bias? Does it take into account one side of an argument only, or one point of view? Is the language used fair and balanced, or is it extreme and one-sided? Does the site list sources to back up its' argument?

Currency: Is the information provided up-to-date? When was it last updated? Compare the information given with your class textbook or any book dealing with the same topic.

Clarity: Is the information laid out in a manner that is well organized and easy to read? Are there graphics included, and are they helpful? Are there spelling mistakes, poor grammar, or inappropriate word usage?

Accessibility: Does the site load quickly? Is it easy to navigate, and is there a site map to help you find what you are looking for? Is the information laid out in a logical manner, or is it disorganized and difficult to follow?

A note on Wikipedia and other wikis:

A wiki is a kind of website that can be edited, modified or deleted by anyone at any time, from anywhere in the world, with little or no restrictions placed upon them. With **Wikipedia** in particular, the author of an article can remain anonymous, and does not have to give any credentials or provide supporting evidence to back up their claims. This means that a person with no credentials can post anything they like, whether it is accurate or not. While it is entirely possible that an entry in Wikipedia is factually correct, there is no real way of knowing for certain. Wikipedia and other wikis may not be acceptable websites to use for your work.

Please see your Librarian for help if you need help to determine whether you should be using a website for your homework and research assignments.

USING DATABASES

Did you know that you have access to EbscoHost, Gale CENGAGE, and Infobase Article Databases?

WHAT ARE THEY?

- Article databases are specific websites that you have access to because you are a student in the Halton Catholic District School Board. An online database is an organized collection of resources providing information from encyclopedias, textbooks, magazines and newspapers.
- You are able to enter a *subject* or *keywords* that describe your topic and the results of your search are magazines, newspapers and journals articles. In other words, periodical articles.

WHAT ARE THEY USED FOR?

- They are used to find reliable articles that can useful when you are doing research-based projects, essays and assignments.
- They are used to find articles that are current, often unbiased, containing data that may provide a point of view that is similar to yours.
- They provide information about the author of the article and where it comes from which allows you to verify credibility.

HOW DO YOU ACCESS THEM?

- When you are **at school**, you can access the databases from your school library webpage or from the schoolboard's Library Services webpage-*no passwords are required*.
- When you are at **home** you have special access to these databases from your school library webpage or from the schoolboard's Library Services webpage but *you will need usernames and passwords* – please see your library for a list of usernames and passwords.

Here is a list of just some of the databases you will have access to:

EBSCO*host*	Gale	Infobase
MasterFile Premier	*Academic OneFile*	*Issues and Controversies*
Canadian Reference Centre	*Canada in Context*	*The World Almanac*
HealthSource	*Gale Virtual Reference Library*	*Health Reference Centre*
Science Reference Centre	*General Reference Center Gold*	*Science Online*
Explora	*Expanded Academic ASAP*	*Bloom's Literature*

Please see your Librarian for help if you need help using the databases.