



Searching for Useful and Relevant Information

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As an undergraduate student, the ability to search for relevant and useful information for your assignments is very important. There are some guidelines below that you may want to follow when you are searching for information for your assignments.

- a) First and foremost, you have to understand what responses are required of your assignment. If you are unclear about the nature and aim of the assignment, seek clarification with your instructors.
- b) After understanding the aim of the assignment, identify the possible key words that can help you in your search for the relevant information that is required to build up the responses for the assignment.
- c) If you do not know the key words to start with, find some general readings stated in the course. You may find some useful key words in the readings that can answer the questions in the assignment.
- d) These identified key words, in order of your perceived relevance and importance in answering the assignment's questions should be restricted to three to five of them. There should not be too many preliminary key words as new important ones may evolve during the early sourcing of information.
- e) For searches in the library, type in the key word in the library book catalogue, periodical index and e-journal search engine.
 - If you are searching for information in a book, identify the key word in the Index Section. Go to the pages where the key word is found and start reading. However, if the Index Section is not comprehensively populated, try to find the key word in the chapter titles in the Content Section.
 - As for journals or periodicals, you need to scan for the key word in the abstract and titles of the main sections and their respective sub-sections as there is no Index Section in these materials.
 - Ask a librarian for assistance if needed.



- f) For internet search, understand the various functions of the search engine you are using. Type in the key word correctly and this will lead you to all information related to it. Narrow down the search by:
- Limiting the search by date, language, word in title etc.
 - Identifying only articles in relevant institution's subscribed journals.
 - Identifying only academic materials, through options in the different search engines. Or else, you will be getting personal opinions, comments, complaints, sale pitches and unverified information all together.
 - Further refining the search in the electronic materials or websites you decide to explore.
 - Using Boolean search (*and, or, not*) where a combination of two or more key words are searched. This also allows you to explore if there is any relationship between the key words. Different search engines perform Boolean search differently.
- g) If your key word is not able to yield useful outputs in your search, try the synonyms of the key word or words of similar meaning.
- h) Seek a second opinion on the credibility of your sourced information whenever in doubt.

To conclude, there is a need to be realistic in sourcing for information due to time constraints, the huge amount of information and the difficulty in assessing authenticity and importance of some sources. Thus, it is important to set a time to stop sourcing for information and start writing so that your assignment submission deadlines are met.