

Online Searching: Tips for Pros

Take a few minutes to brainstorm your topic and think about “like” words or phrases...when you go to search, it will help you populate search boxes.

When doing this step, think like a website...instead of googling “How to know if you have the measles?”, try “Measles Symptoms”.

Don’t just use Google...make sure you are trying GOOGLE ADVANCED SEARCH.

All these words: searches each word separately

Ex. north american natives

Exact words or phrase: put your words in quotes

Ex. “native americans”

Any of these words: put OR in-between words

Ex. Sioux or Cheyenne or Pueblo or Illini

None of these words: eliminates the words in this box with a -

Ex. -mascots, Illinois, hockey, football

Also remember if you put an asterisk at the end of the word it will search all derivatives.

Ex. Bank* searches banks, banking, bankers

Use Content Area you want info on Site: Website you want to Search

Ex. Star Wars Site: Time.com

Compare two items using “vs.”

Ex. University of Illinois vs. Illinois State University

When in doubt...don’t hesitate to ask for help from the Library Staff.

Tips for Pros: Validating Websites

Here are few of the ways you can tell if a website you are thinking of using has valid and up to date information.

Try the 5 “W’s”:

Who? Who is putting the information on the site? You can usually find the information the “About Us” or “Contact Us” page.

What? What is the purpose of the site? Is it educational, informative? Is it about selling stuff? This is when the domain name designation will help. Always look for .gov, .edu, or .org when you are researching. Try to avoid .com if you can.

When? When was the last time the website was updated or what is the copyright on the page. This is almost always on the bottom of the “Home” page.

Where? Where is the information from and is there more that I can gather from the source? Think about the tricks for searching Google. If you find some really good information at cdc.gov, try a second search with your topic site: cdc.gov and see if something else comes up.

Why? Why is this information useful and how does it fit into my research? You might find interesting information on your topic, but if it isn’t inside the scope of your research it is not useful.

What about Wikipedia? Wikipedia is NEVER a source. However, it can be helpful if you really don’t know anything about your topic. Just make sure that you find a secondary source for any information you want to use from there.

Tips for Pros: Citing Sources

Why Cite?

We cite sources to show that the information we have gathered is valid, to allow others to utilize our research in their own research and to let others know where to go for further information.

When to cite?

You should cite any source that you use in your paper. If you read something while researching and you think it would make your point or provide the reader with information on your topic cite it! Definitely cite anything that you put in quotes or that you paraphrase. When in doubt...cite it out!

Also, whenever I research and I find a good source, I create my citation right away. That way I know where I went for the information and I never have to go back and try to find it.

How to cite?

Citing sources is like following a recipe. One way to create a correct citation is to use a online citation builder like <http://www.easybib.com/style> Most of your classes in High School will require MLA 8. Be aware that if you use Easy Bib and any information is left off, you are still responsible for finding what is missing.

You can also use:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_works_cited_page_basic_format.html Purdue Owl is a non-profit site from Purdue University that provides free style guides for various citation styles including MLA 8.