Research for your assignment

Library Study Guide

READINGS AND TEXTBOOKS

A great place to start your research is by looking at the **readings** that your topic coordinator sets for you each week. Readings can include textbook chapters, articles, web pages, documents, and videos. They help support your learning, familiarise you with the topic, and some of them may also be a suitable reference for your assignment.

Hot tip: Look for the book icon in your FLO topic to access your readings.

FOLLOW THE REFERENCE TRAIL

Have you found an article or book chapter that is relevant to your assignment? The author should have listed a lot of **references** to support their writing. Look and see if any of them are relevant to you - this could save you a lot of research time!

Hot tip: You can also find out who has **cited** the article that you have read. It is a useful way to discover how this information has been used by other authors. Look for the **'Cited by'** link in Findit@flinders and other academic databases.

SEARCH LIBRARY RESOURCES

The Library subscribes to millions of peer reviewed, academic resources that are accessible via the Findit@Flinders catalogue and individual subject related databases. You can find articles, data, news, primary resources, books, eBooks, special collections and more!

Hot tip: Before you start searching, think about what it is you are being asked to do in your assignment. Include the following in your research process:

- Think about your question and start to brainstorm some keywords that you can use for searching the Library catalogue and databases

- Do some background research to locate basic information, broaden your understanding and think about different perspectives on your topic

- Decide what type of information you need, for example analysis or commentary, facts and figures, original research or studies, or legal information

SEARCHING SUCCESS

Databases and catalogues have a particular way of storing, sorting, and retrieving information. There are a series of steps that you can follow when you search, to increase the relevancy of the resources that you find.

Identify your keywords

Develop a list of **keywords and synonyms** to cover all the different words that could be used to say the same thing, for example a synonym of dog is canine.

Hot tip: Use a thesaurus, encyclopaedia or general background search to help you identify words to try.

Link your concepts together

You will need to link your concepts together in a way that a database will understand. We do this by using the connector word **AND**.

Hot tip: Use quotation marks if you are using a phrase instead of one singular keyword, for example "climate change"

Example search No.1 = "climate change" AND "developing countries"

Example search No.2 = "global warming" AND "developing countries"

Running the search

Log in to Findit@Flinders or select a database and paste your linked keywords directly into the search box.

Refine your search results using date, resource type, subject etc.

Hot tip: You could also use the advanced search tool in the database to link the concepts together. Remember that help is always at hand! Each database has a help tool, or you can contact the Library for assistance.

Evaluating the search

How do your search results look? Do they relate to your topic? Are there too many or not enough? Scan the titles and abstracts to check if they match the keywords and concepts that you have used in the search.

Hot tip: Look at the following table to troubleshoot some common search result problems

The results are not relevant	Scan through and see if you can find one or two results that look OK Read the title or abstract, are there any new keywords that you can identify and use in your next search?
There are too many results	Think about adding more specific terms e.g., "United States" instead of "North America"
There are not enough results	Are there more synonyms that you could use? Would trying a different database be appropriate? Is this a new field of research? Has there been any literature published yet?
The literature is too old	Depending on your topic, this may be OK – for example, if the field has not changed much, and no new research has been necessary

YOU HAVE FOUND SOME INFORMATION: NOW WHAT?

Is the academic literature that you have found relevant to your research? Is it credible enough to refer to in your assignment?

Hot Tip: The CRAAP test can help you with your evaluation process.

Currency

- When was the information produced?

- Is the age appropriate? Older information may be OK, it depends on your research question and what you need to answer it

Relevance

- Is it on topic?

- Does it have enough detail? Or is it too basic, or too advanced?

Authority

- Who wrote it? What were their qualifications, and do they have any affiliations? Would this bias them in any way?

- Who published it? Has the publication gone through any editing or checking process? Has it been peer-reviewed?

Accuracy

- Is what they say supported by evidence? Do they use references that you can follow up on? How reliable are these sources?

- Can you verify or corroborate the information from another source?

- Are there any obvious errors? For example, spelling mistakes, errors in numbers or data used, etc.

Purpose

- Why was it created?

- To further extend knowledge in the field.

- To entertain the wider public.

- To influence? (Rightly or wrongly)

- To promote an agenda. (e.g., political, ideological)

- Who funded it? Is this likely to bias the information in any way?

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Would you like more help? The Library offers a range of resources tailored to how you like to learn including lessons and modules, videos, fact sheets, and discipline related resources! You can find everything you need on the Library website at the Information Literacy Gateway.