

# Research, Source Criticism and Citations



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## Research – suggestions and advice

The first thing you should think about when searching for information is what **task** was set by your teacher? What is expected of you? How much time do you have to complete your assignment? Has your teacher specified how many and what types of sources you should use?

The next step is to think about what you already know and what you will start research. **What is it about the topic that interests you** and what questions do you have? **Write down your ideas.** Often the act of writing things down can help you organise your thoughts. Make sure you pick a topic that interests you, as this will make the research much more enjoyable. It is also good to brainstorm and discuss your ideas with your class.

Now it is time to start looking for **background information.** The library recommends **encyclopedias** and **dictionaries.** This is the quickest route to the information you need, and you know will be relevant and reliable.

While you are reading articles in encyclopedias and finding definitions in dictionaries, you will come across keywords. These can be names of people, places, events and concepts. Write these keywords down because you will need them later as **search words.**

While you are looking for background information, you may find yourself feeling confused. You are not alone. Please seek help from your librarian or teacher. Eventually it will become clearer what you need to focus on and write about.

You now have an overview of your topic from reading about it in encyclopedias. It is now time to formulate or reformulate **what you will focus on.** Write inquiry questions. For example, who is Marie Antoinette? What kinds of influence did she have in society? Be sure to get approval of your chosen direction from your teacher!

Before searching for the answers to your questions it, look over your search words. You wrote these down when looking in dictionaries

and encyclopedias. Which words will best help you to find more in-depth information? Are there keywords in your inquiry questions that you could use as search words? You should also consider **synonyms** and phrases that you could use.

Now it is time to plan where you will look for this information. There are **databases** that contain information on many topics and some that are subject specific.

Use information from a **variety of sources**. For example, news, non-fiction books, scientific articles, statistics, interviews, videos, photos, diaries and more. This will ensure you get **different perspectives** on your topic and not miss important information. What will be your **guiding inquiry question**? Decide this with your teacher and continue your research until you feel ready to **start writing**.

Below is an information search process that you go through when undertaking a project. It outlines what you might be feeling and when. You might find you feel differently at different points in the process. You might need to move back and forth. This is normal. Remember to talk to a teacher or librarian if you are feeling confused or anxious.

Tasks	Get started	Get ideas (establish a focus)	Gather background information	Come up with inquiry question	Gather in-depth information	Start writing or creating	Share your learning experiences
Feelings	Apprehension, Uncertainty 	Optimism 	Confusion, Frustration, Doubt, Anxiety 	Clarity, Evaluation, Understanding 	Sense of direction/confidence 	Satisfaction / disappointment  	Sense of accomplishment 
Thoughts	Vague			Focused	Increased interest		Increased self-awareness
Actions	Seeking relevant information / Exploring			Seeking pertinent information / Documenting			

Inspired by: <https://inquirylearningbestpractice.wordpress.com/analysis-of-the-ila/> [2017-03-14]. The information search model described and used above is developed 2004 by Carrol Collier Kuhlthau.

## Sources

You can reach most sources from the library blog:

<https://lmcgotaberg.wordpress.com/>

Via the blog you will find the **encyclopedias** the school subscribes to. They are adapted for secondary school and high school:

- **Britannica:** A huge, user-friendly encyclopedia providing information on different **reading levels**, with related information attached, (such as multimedia, website tips, etcetera).
- **Discover:** provided by the database World Book. An easy-to-read encyclopedia equipped with easy-to-browse categories. The articles can be translated into several **different languages**.
- **Estudiantil Hallazgos:** provided by the database World Book. An encyclopedia in **Spanish** where you can search for articles, dictionary definitions, pictures, and maps.
- **Funk & Wagnall's New World Encyclopedia:** provided by EBSCO. Beside encyclopedia articles, you can also find images and short, biographical information.
- **L'Encyclopédie Découverte:** provided by the database World Book. An encyclopedia in **French**, where you can search for articles, dictionary definitions, pictures, and maps.

Some databases are subject-specific and some are interdisciplinary. Here are tips of **databases** that fit different MYP subject categories:

- **Alex Författarlexikon** (in Swedish and some information in English and German): Here you can find biographical information on **authors**, information on literary prizes, literary terms, genres and literature from different countries.
- **Explora Secondary School** (in English): provided by EBSCO. This interdisciplinary, user-friendly database provides good **overviews** of topics and you can also use **easy-to-browse** categories.
- **Global Issues in Context** (in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish): An interdisciplinary database. It ties together a wealth of different sources and source types to support **global awareness**. It is also a good source if you need to search information on a specific country.
- **GreenFILE** (in English): Here you can find information on the human impact on the **environment**.
- **Health Source – Consumer Edition** (in English): Here you can find articles from consumer health magazines, on food and nutrition, sports and **health**, psychology and medicine.
- **JSTOR** (in English, French, Spanish and other languages): provided by the non-profit Ithaka. This database is like a huge digital library containing **primary sources** and both back issues and up-to-date issues of journals. It is interdisciplinary but specialises in the **humanities and social sciences**.
- **Middle Search Plus** (in English): Contains a wide range of **primary sources**, including **historical and biographical materials** and more.

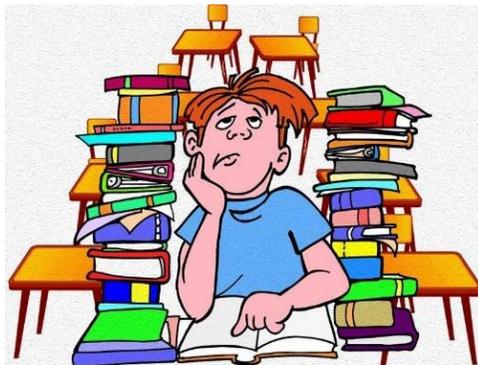
- **Oposing Viewpoints in Context** (in English): Contains different sources and source types covering information on contemporary hot topics, concerning **language, art** and **science**.
- **Science Reference Center** (in English): A database about **mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, environmental science** and **health and medicine**. This database includes encyclopedia articles, journal articles and other types of information. You can also find biographical information on scientists.
- **Topic Search** (in English): This interdisciplinary database contains different types of sources, especially about **social sciences, economics** and **scientific discoveries**.
- **World Book** (in English): You can get good **overviews** of different topics through the Advanced option. You can get help with **citations** through the Student module. There are modules you can use to find information on: **timelines** for different topics, **ancient peoples, drama, science, sustainability**. You can also find **eBooks** to read.

Via the library blog, you can also use the ISGR/IHGR **library catalogue** to search for **non-fiction books**, fiction books, audio books, journals, magazines and other resources:

[http://isgr.mlasolutions.com/oasis/catalog/\(S\(c43gwkv3hlcotfrfcenc5tut\)\)/Default.aspx?installation=Default](http://isgr.mlasolutions.com/oasis/catalog/(S(c43gwkv3hlcotfrfcenc5tut))/Default.aspx?installation=Default)

There are also **news** sources you can access:

- **Newspaper Source** (in English): It contains newspaper articles from international, national and regional newspaper sources. It is quite **U.S.- centered**, though.
- **Onlinenewspapers.com** (in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese): This newspaper directory gives you access to newspapers from all over the **world**.
- **8 sidor** (in Swedish, English, Arabic, Persian, Somalian and other languages): An **easy-to-read** journal containing news.
- **Mediearkivet** (in Swedish): Contains information from Swedish newspapers and magazines.



## Source Criticism

To be source critical means to be able to examine, analyse, interpret and assess information. The purpose is to see if the source is relevant, reliable and of high quality. Weak sources can lead to your work being of poor quality.

It is important to approach source criticism with a **questioning mind**. If you are using websites, you need to spend more time being source critical than if you use reliable sources such as encyclopedias and articles from the databases.

- You should always use the **four Ws**. **Who** has written **what** for **whom** and **why**?
- **Who** has written the information? Are they an expert in their field? Is it an organisation or an individual? What qualifications does the author have? What are the author's affiliations? Can you detect any lack of neutrality (personal, emotional, how data was collected, an analysis done, or anything else)? Is there any contact information?
- **What** does the source contain? Is it relevant to what you are doing? Does the author cite where they got the information from? Does the author back up their points with other people's research/opinions, etc.? Would you feel comfortable using their information if you were a scientist or researcher? Is it well-written? When was the information last updated? Can you find the same information elsewhere?

- **Whom** is it written for? Is it appropriate for that audience? Assess whether the audience is academic or general public, which age group, gender, etcetera. How does the text reveal the targeted audience?
- **Why** was the information created? Does the author clearly state the reason the information was created? Is it to inform, to incite emotion, entertain, to make money, to express an opinion or spread propaganda? For example, are they using facts, a neutral tone, are there adverts, PayPal etcetera. Try to find the clues!

Remember! Anyone can publish information on the Internet. It is your job to **fact check**, to investigate information in order to verify facts.

Here are some examples of what you can do to fact check:

- Look for the information in an encyclopedia to get a more objective view.
- Check what other sources, for example the database or news say about the information or the author.
- Look up the author's references. Are reasonable conclusions being drawn?
- If you are using a webpage, check the domain name (.com, .edu., info., .gov., etc.). It can give you a clue to potential bias.



## Primary and Secondary Sources

You will be asked to use Primary and Secondary sources in your research.

A **primary source** is when the information that comes directly from the source or is the source closest to the topic of investigation. Usually it is obtained by research or observation. Most of the time it is created at the time under study.

Examples of primary sources are news articles written by a journalist during or shortly after an event, data, statistics, witnesses' accounts, recorded personal interviews or telephone interviews, technical reports, songs, plays, emails asking for specific information, published results of scientific experiments, public opinion polls, surveys.

A **secondary source** is when the author has used information from elsewhere. The original information has been analysed, commented on, summarised, evaluated or interpreted.

Examples of secondary sources are articles analysing data from websites, interpretations of creative works, articles analysing accounts of a problem, comments on original research results presented in journals, review articles, handbooks or videos about how to use tools, textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias.



may the source  
be with you

## **This is what you need to consider and be aware of:**

**Primary sources** give you unfiltered access to authentic but possibly biased information. When you are using this type of information you know that it is original. You will need to use your analytical skills to decide if it is a good source.

When you use **secondary sources** you are relying on someone else's interpretation and need to be even more source critical. Secondary research is good for expanding your understanding of the topic. You can use secondary sources for different purposes, for example:

- Encyclopedia articles and overviews: to build up background information.
- Non-fiction books and textbooks: to describe the major features and provide more detailed accounts than encyclopedia articles.
- Academic journal articles: to use in depth information and formulate arguments.
- News articles, blogs, social media: to find out about current events and trends.



Source: [https://cdn.slidesharecdn.com/ss\\_thumbnails/academic-honesty-2-1227149900857646-8-thumbnail.jpg?cb=1293020351\[2017-09-13\]](https://cdn.slidesharecdn.com/ss_thumbnails/academic-honesty-2-1227149900857646-8-thumbnail.jpg?cb=1293020351[2017-09-13]). Modifications have been done to the original picture.

## Academic Honesty

It is important to **be honest** about where you have found your information. It is also important to give recognition to the author for their hard work.

Citing where you get your information also protects you from **plagiarism**. To plagiarise means that you use someone else's written text, ideas (intellectual property), images or music without stating who created it and where you got it from.

**Citation** tells the reader that you are using information from another source. You should always create a **bibliography**, which lists all sources visited but not necessarily used. A **works cited** page lists sources that directly influenced the written work.

## How do you create a citation?

You can use websites to help **create your citations**. For example, Easybib, Noodletools MLA Lite, or RefMe. You should become familiar with the **elements** that make up a citation.

- The author's name (it could also be the name of a university, governmental department or organisation)
- Title
- Place of publication
- Publisher
- Date of publication
- Page number
- Volume and number (for journal articles)

Remember to **keep a record** of your citations and sources. You can make a list of all sources, email them to yourself, use refme.com, save them on your desktop, etc. How do you keep a record of your sources?

For more information, ask the library and have a look at the school's Academic Honesty Policy (AHP):

<https://lmcgotaberg.wordpress.com/academic-honesty-policy/>



## MLA7 Citations

Here are examples of how you create citations in MLA format.

### Book (Print)

Last, First M. *Book Title*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year Published. Print.

### Article from an online encyclopedia

Last, First M. "Article Title." *Encyclopedia Name*. City: Publisher, Year Published. Page(s). *Website Title*. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

### Newspaper article found online

Last, First M. "Article Title." *Newspaper Title*. Date Month Year Published: Page(s). *Website Title*. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

### Journal articles from a database

Last, First M. "Article Title." *Journal Title* Series Volume. Issue (Year Published): Page(s). *Database Name*. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

### Blog

Last, First M. "Article Title." Blog Post Type. \* *Website/Blog Title*. Website Publisher, Date Month Year Published. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

**\*Blog post type refers to what type of content you are using.** Is it a standard blog on a website, an audio blog (podcast) or a vlog (video blog)?

### **Film or Film Clips**

Director or producer's last name Last, First M /poster's username. "Title of Video." Online video clip. *Name of Website*. Name of Website's publisher, date posted. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

If you have downloaded the movie from *Youtube*, you also need to include information about who uploaded the movie clip.

### **Webpage with author**

Last, First M. "Article Title." *Website Title*. Website Publisher, Date Month Year Published. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

### **Webpage no author**

"Website Article." *Website Title*. Website Publisher, Date Month Year Published. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

### **An interview that you have undertaken**

Last Name of Interviewee, First Name M. Type of Interview (Personal Interview, Phone Interview, Skype Interview, etc.). Date Month Year.

(If you use an interview from the web, a book, a magazine or TV/radio, you will have to adjust this citation. You can use Easybib to do this.)

### **Photograph found on a website**

Last, First M, Photograph Title. Year Created. Photograph. *Museum/Institution*, Location. *Website Title*. Web. Date Month Year Accessed.

For more information on how to cite other types of sources, please visit:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

<http://www.easybib.com/guides/citation-guides/mla-format/>

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