

Top Tips for carrying out Research

1. Make sure before you start that you really know what you are trying to find out.

2. Think about the best way to collect information.

3. You will need to keep a bibliography or list of sources from which you found out information.

- Books: give author, title, date of publication
- Newspapers/magazines: title of article, title of publication, date of publication
- Website: full URL

4. You have decided to use the Internet: where do you start?

a) Use a search engine like Google.

b) Identify the key words in your question or title.

For example: You want to find out about Nokia mobile phones - there are three key words:

- Nokia
- Mobile
- Phone

If you type just one of them then the search will give millions of hits.

Even if you type in all three - Nokia mobile phones - there will still be too many hits to sort out because the search engine will look for each word separately.

You need to type them in like this: "Nokia mobile phones" - the search engine now looks for these three words linked together.

c) Check the first few sites listed. Ignore the advertisements at the sides of the page.

d) Open a site and quickly scan the contents. Look for the key words in your research topic. Can you understand the first two or three sentences? If you can't understand them - then it isn't a good site for you to use. Check it is what you really are looking for. If it is then carry on. If not close and open another site.

e) Highlight the web address bar, copy and paste into a Word document - your source list. Number the source. Quickly add a note about that site -

e.g. is it for or against the topic. If you are unable to copy and paste the web address then you will need to write out the full URL.

f) Copy and paste the information you want to use. Make sure you number this page with the same number you used in your source list.

g) Now repeat for more sources (at least 4).

5. You have decided to use a book or newspaper/magazine: where do you start?

a) Use the index to look for the topic.

b) Quickly scan the page(s). Do they provide the information you are looking for?

c) Write down in your source list the full details of the book/article. Number the source list.

6. Now select information from your source. With web pages it is a good idea to use a highlighter pen to mark the bits you need.

7. For sources you have found you need to decide:

- do they provide an answer to the research topic
- are all sources just giving you one side of the argument or one view
- where has the source obtained the information from, is there any bias e.g. if you were looking for information on whaling then Greenpeace would be biased.
- have you collected balanced points of view e.g. a comment for and against the argument

8. You should now write down on file paper a summary of the information you have found out. Don't copy it word for word. **IN YOUR OWN WORDS.**

9. If you want to use a quote, copy it exactly using "....." to show it is a quote. Make sure you have a reference for the quote.