

**LEARN WITH
BRITANNICA**

STUDENT RESOURCE / MIDDLE SCHOOL

Research Guide

**Why Use
Britannica?**

**Information Literacy
& Learning to Find
the Facts**

**Guide to Good
Research**

**Learn to become an independent
researcher and confident
inquirer.**



**Britannica
EDUCATION**

INTRODUCTION

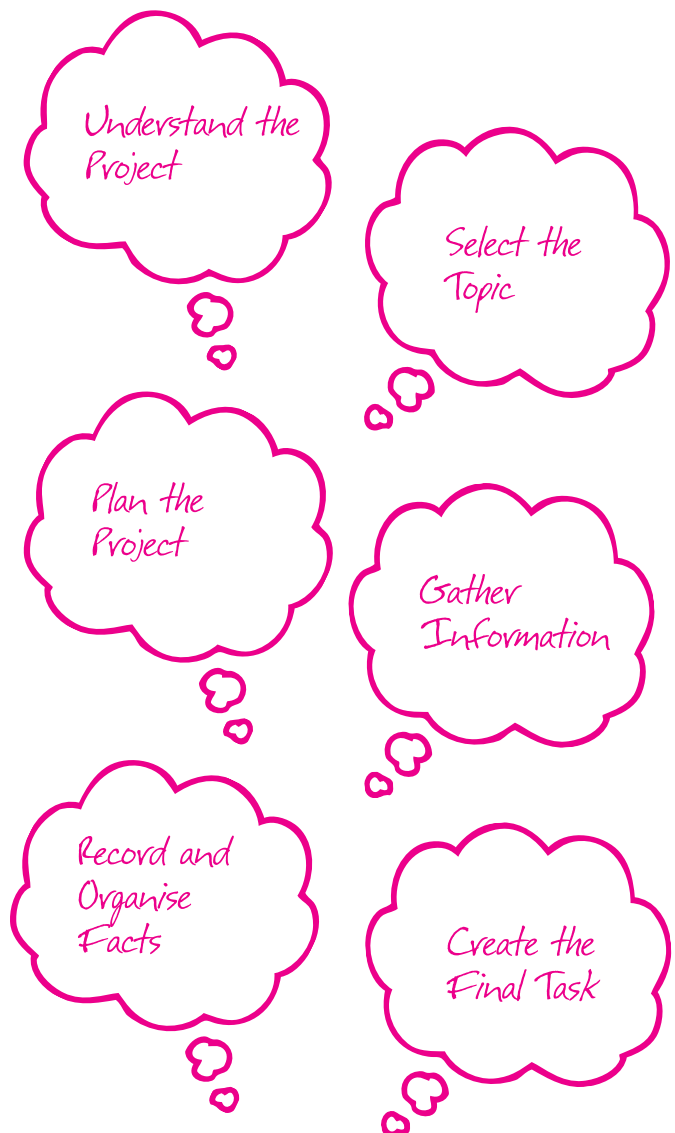
Your 5 Step Guide to Effective Research

You research all the time, probably without even thinking about it or realising you are doing it.

Maybe you checked the internet to find the latest sports results, or you looked up the biography of a musician you really like? Every time you put in keywords for an internet search or looked up something in a book or magazine, you were doing informal research!

For a research project, you conduct formal research. This means using resources to answer a question, solve a problem, or find out something you want to know. You'll be like a detective, using your research skills to dig out the facts, organise them, and draw conclusions from them.

This guide presents a five-step process to get you from start to finish in your research. Once you learn these steps, you'll have a vital skill you can apply throughout your life.

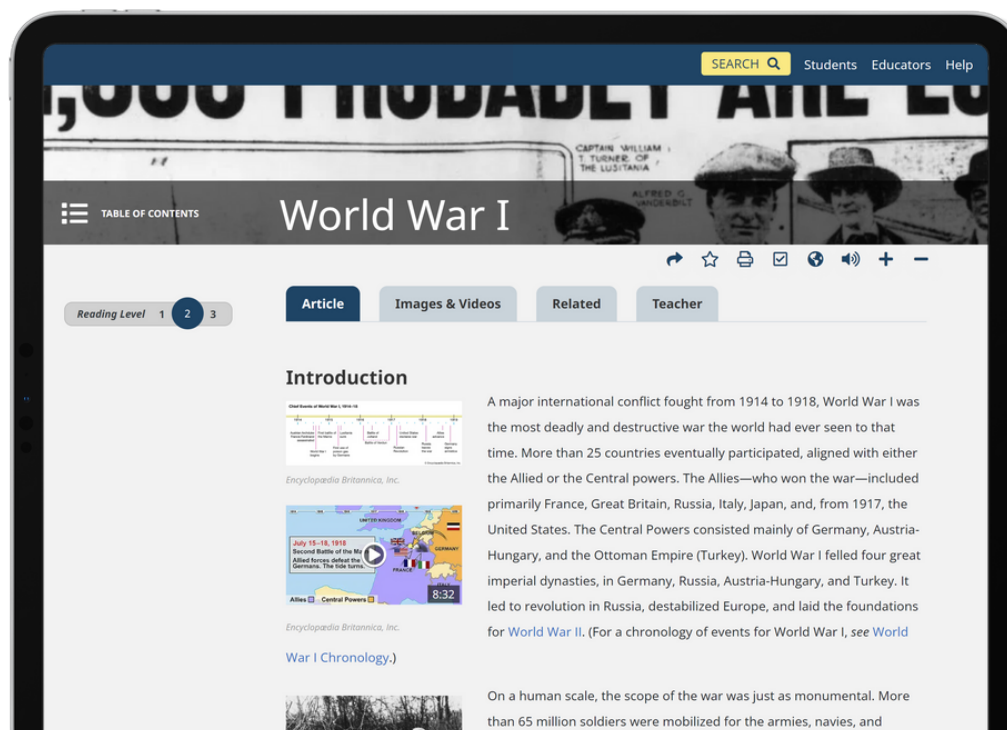
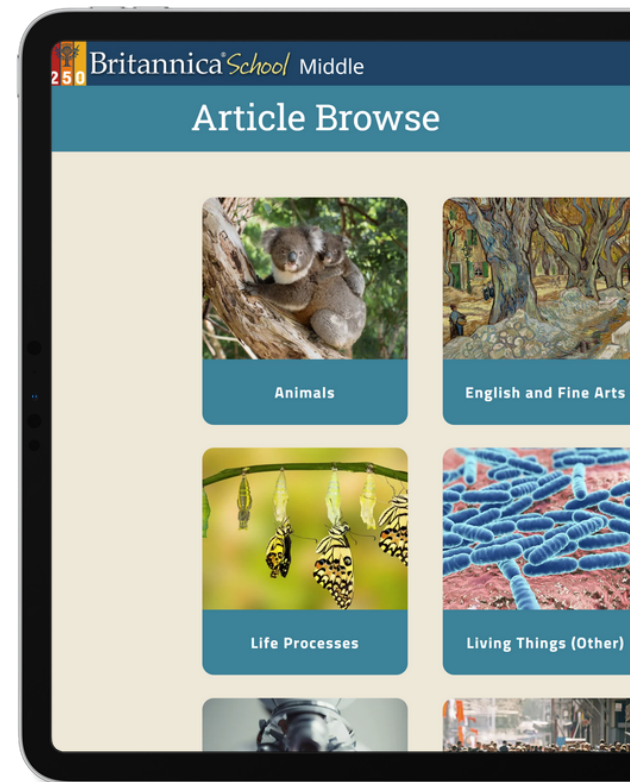


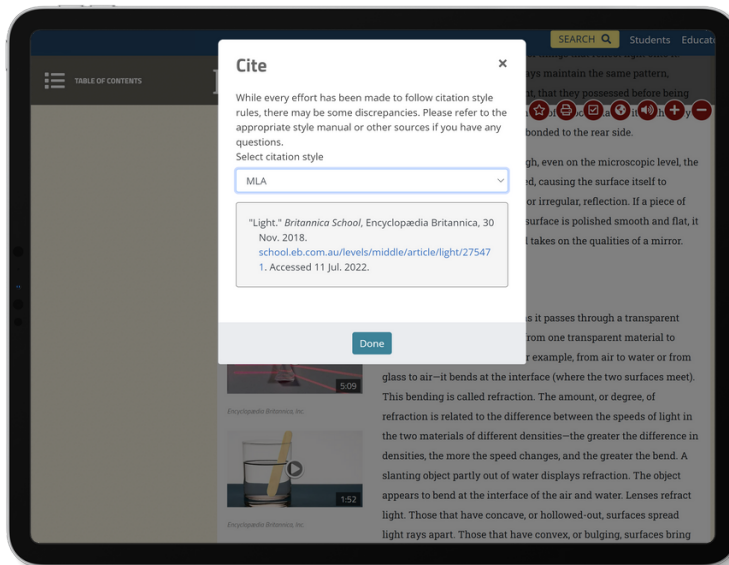
How can Britannica School help to make research easier?

Britannica School is trusted by students and teachers around the world as a go-to source of factual information. With hundreds of thousands of articles, images, videos, primary sources and websites on all subjects, it's the go-to site for researching almost any topic!

elearn.eb.com/britannica-school →

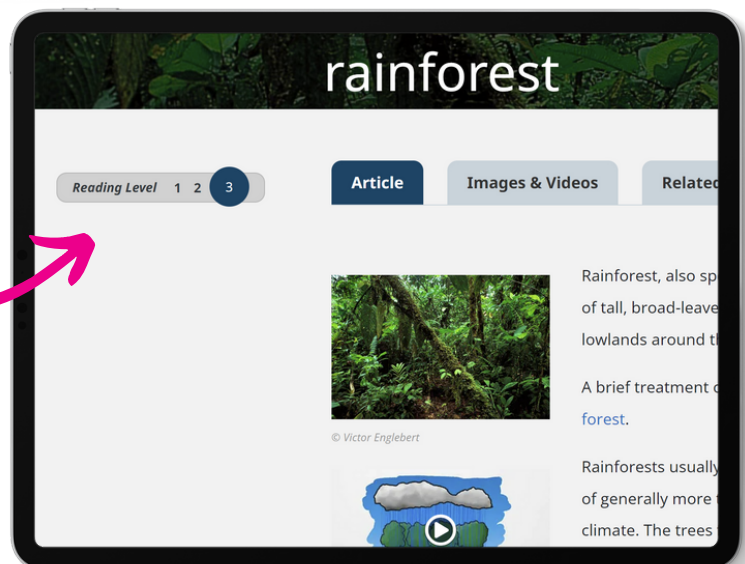
Britannica School is a **safe and secure** platform designed just for education. All the information is **up to date, balanced and vetted** through a rigorous editorial process.





Britannica School has a built-in **citation tool** which allows you to generate resource citations with one click. Easy!

Choose from **up to 3 Reading Levels** for each article, to find the one that works for you.



If you can't find the information you need, Britannica's **'Web's Best Sites'** feature is a great way to explore other reliable information found on the web.

Below are Britannica's five steps to research.
Each step will be covered in this guide!

1 Understand the Project



2 Select the Topic and Plan the Project



3 Gather Information



4 Record and Organise Facts



5 Create the Final Task

STEP 1

Understand the Topic



Before starting, do you understand the basic requirements of the task?
What information about the project have you been given so far?
Taking this step will give you the big picture and help guide your research.

Think About....

What is the purpose of the project?

- Inform
- Entertain
- Persuade
- Other

Who is the intended audience?

- Peers
- Teacher
- Community
- Other

Is the task individual or group?

Is there a word/page limit?

When is the project due?

What is the final product to be created?

- Written
- Oral
- Multimedia
- Other

What types of resources will be used?

STEP 2

Select your Topic and Plan the Project



Now it's time to choose your topic, remember when selecting a topic make sure it meets the basic requirements of the task from Part 1.

Think About....

- Will the topic be suitable for the type of final presentation?
- Will the topic meet the purpose of the project?
- Does the topic interest you?
- Is there enough information on the topic?
- Can you understand the information around this topic?

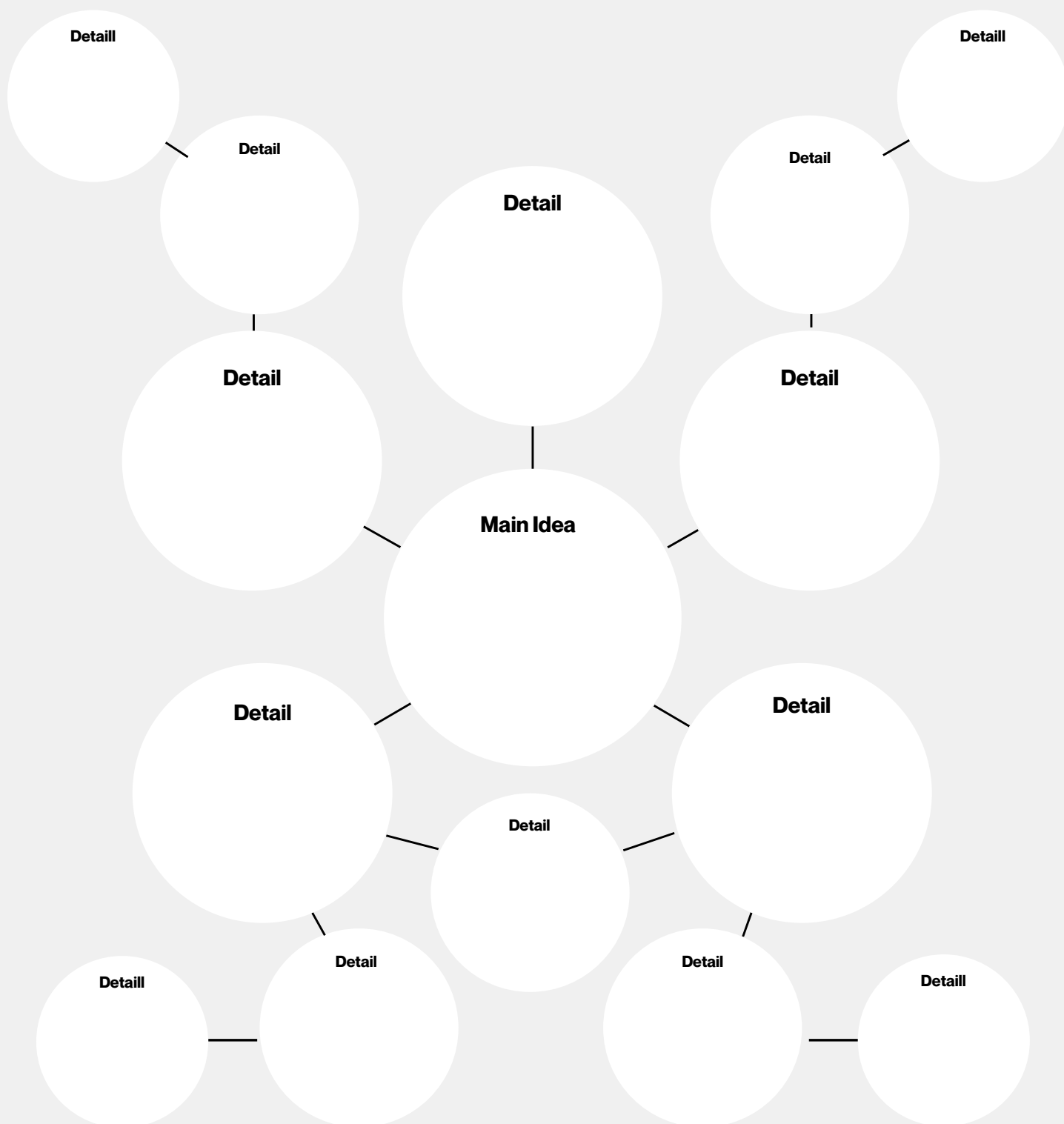
Whether you are assigned a topic or are selecting something independently, start by making a list of what you know about the topic. This will allow you to evaluate your current knowledge and plan what you need to learn.

What I Already Know

What I Need to Learn

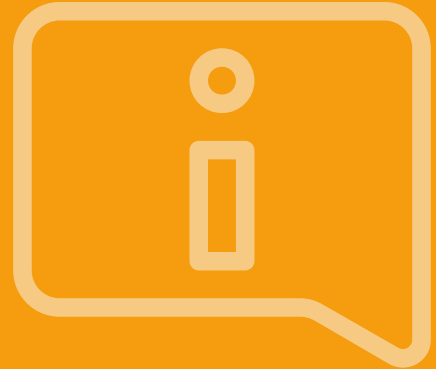
Think About....

Use the idea web below to help you think about and explore areas around your topic. Try to decide on at least two or three subtopics in relation to the main idea that you may want to research into.



STEP 3

Gather Information



To complete research for your topic, you need to know:

- The types of information you need: primary and secondary sources.
- Where to find the information you want?
- Which search terms to use in your hunt?
- How to evaluate the information you find?

Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

Print, online, and video resources are divided into primary and secondary sources.

PRIMARY SOURCES

These documents, recordings, videos, or images are original, first-hand accounts of an event or a time.

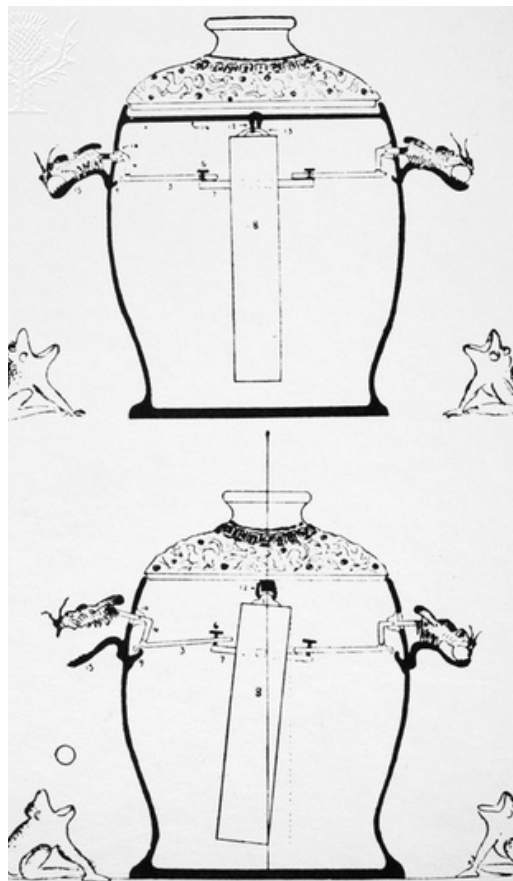
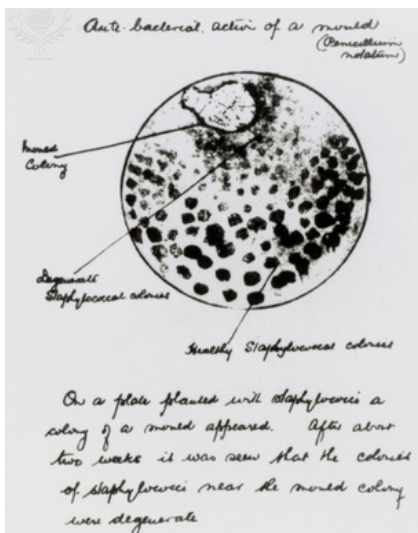
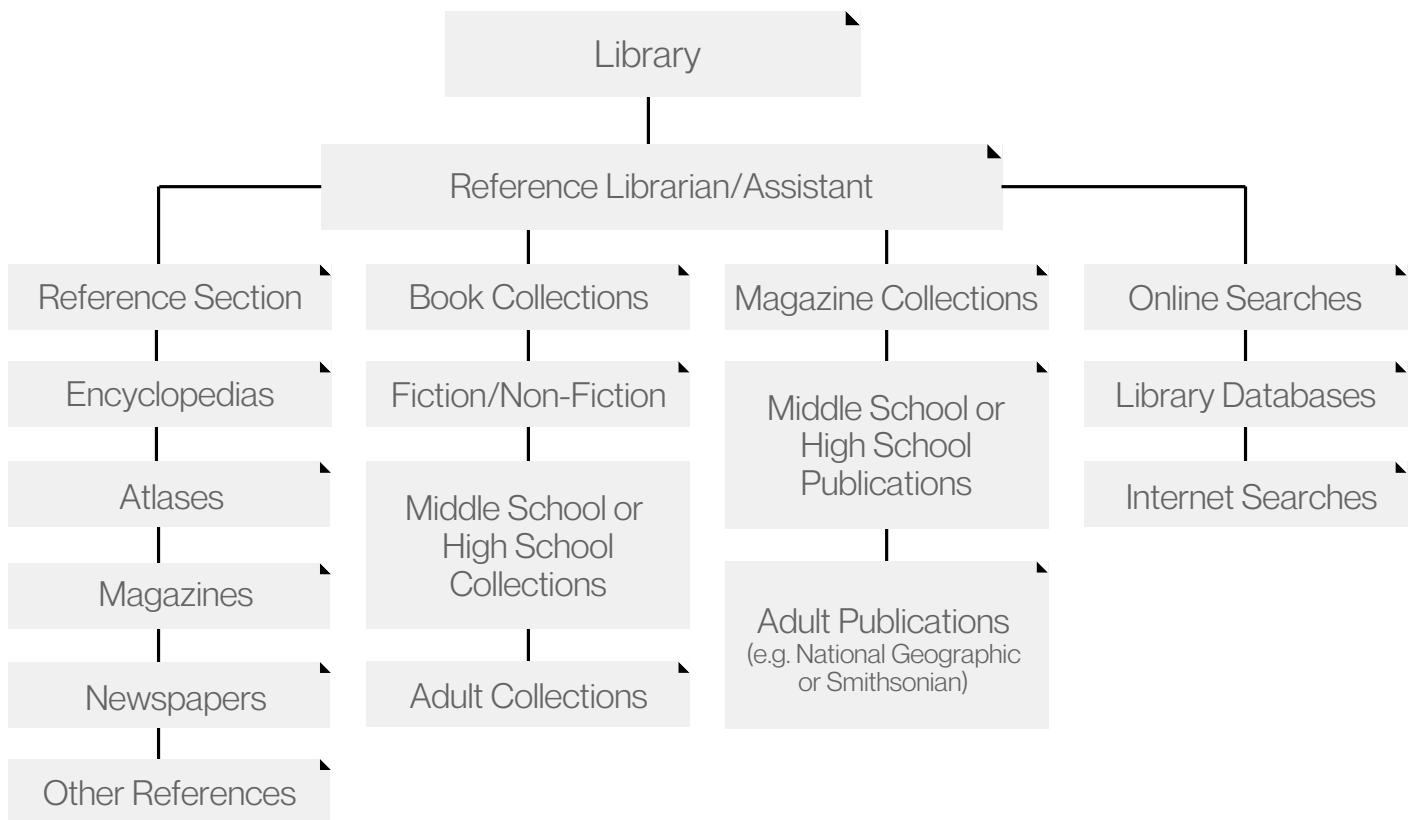
They are created during or close to a particular event or time. The Diary of Anne Frank, for example, is a primary source.

SECONDARY SOURCES

These documents, recording, videos, or images are second-hand accounts of an historical event or a time.

They often analyse or interpret primary sources. For example a biography that quotes Anne Frank's diary

Where can you find primary and secondary sources?



Some examples of primary sources. Image Credit: Britannica ImageQuest

Which Search Terms to Use?

Finding the right information is often about using keywords. You need to narrow your search by refining your search terms.

Think carefully about what you want to know regarding your topic. In the case of global warming, for instance, do you want to know about the causes of global warming or how we can prevent global warming? By being more specific, you'll find the exact information you need for your research.

What Search Terms Should You Use for Your Subject?

Think about what you want to know. Put the main topic at the top and search terms underneath for more specificity.



How to Evaluate Information?

Here are some things to think about when searching for information from different sources such as the news, an advertisement, a social media post, or any other kind of media.



How to Evaluate Information?

Not every resource you find will be worth using. How do you separate the best resources from those that are less useful? When carrying out your research, consider reasons why you should/should not use that source. This will give you a better understanding of how trustworthy it is.

ACCURATE

- Can you find the same information in any other source?
- Is the resource well written and free of obvious typos and errors?

RELIABLE

- Is the source as free from bias as possible? Stick to resources that are purely factual when learning about new topics.
- Who is the publisher? Who owns the website? Look up the publisher or website owner online. Do they have a good reputation? What else have they published or written about?

CREDIBLE

- Can you tell who wrote the book, article, or online piece? What education or experience do they have? Look for academic degrees or years of experience working in a particular field.
- Is there contact information? Can you email or write to the author, organisation, or website to ask questions or to get further information?

CURRENT

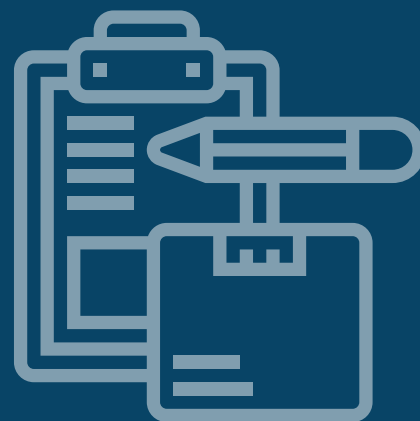
- For most topics, you'll need recent sources. When was the book or article published?
- For books, look for the year they were published on the copyright page. You can find it after the title page. For magazines, look for the month and year of publication.
- For websites, look for the date or "last updated" line. Is the site kept up to date or does it have old information?

Note Taking Resource

| SOURCE | Reasons to Use | Reasons Not to Use |
|--------|----------------|--------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

STEP 4

Record and Organised Facts



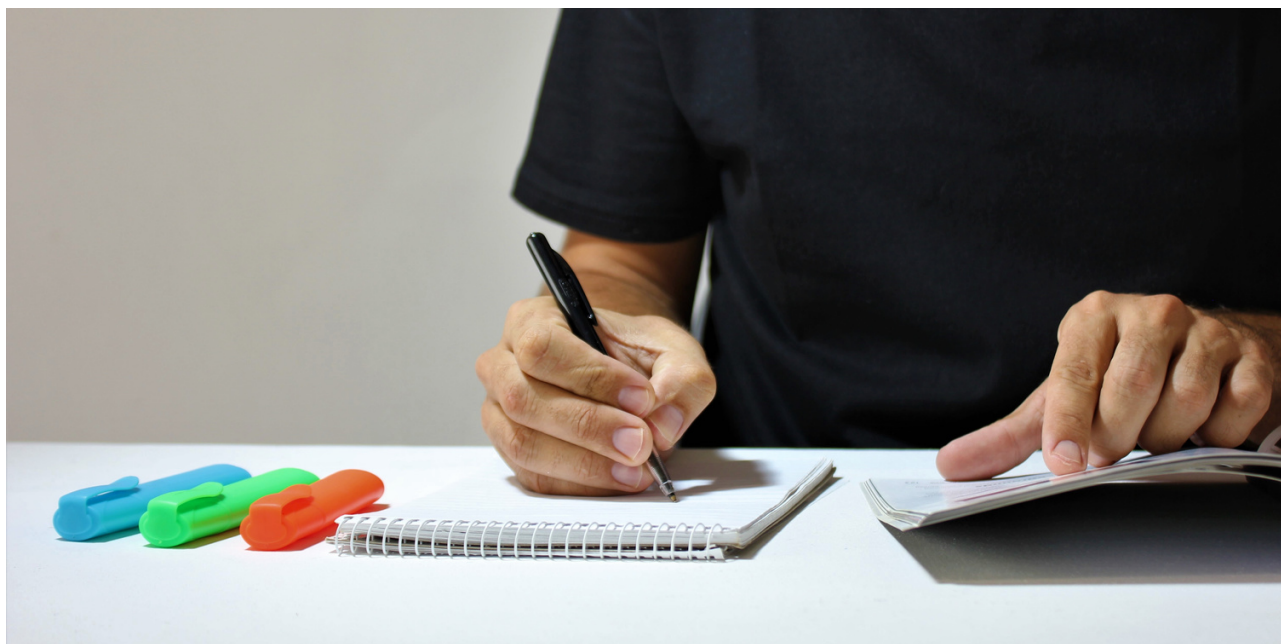
Once you have your resources, you can start taking notes. Taking notes has four important goals:

- To record the main ideas you will use to prepare your project.
- To gather specific details or evidence to support your main ideas.
- To record quotations that you want to use in your project.
- To note that graphic images might support your text.

Notes are a few words you write down to collect important ideas and facts you will use later in your project.

Your notes do not have to be complete sentences, or even complete words, as long as you can read and understand them later.

Find out Secrets to Note-Taking on the following pages!



Secrets to Note Taking

SECRET #1: USE A NUMBERING SYSTEM

As you do your research, you need to keep track of the resources you use and the notes you take from each resource. The secret: **use a note-taking numbering system** and stick to it.

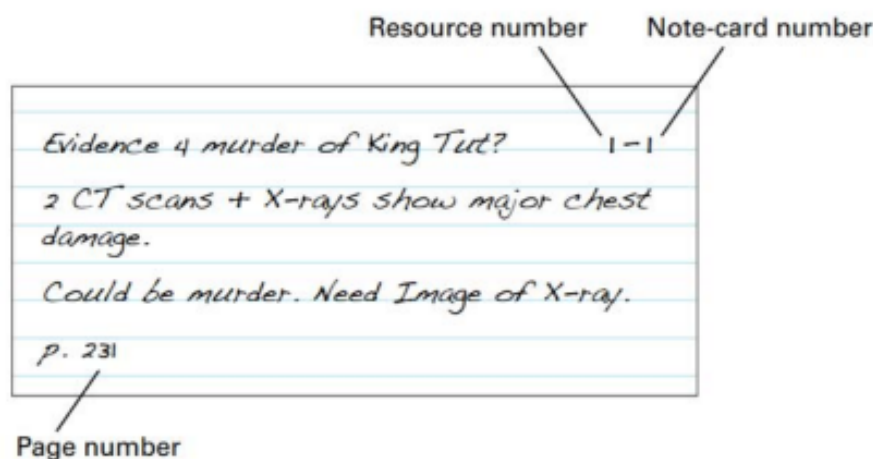
There are many systems, but one of the simplest is:

1. Number your resources
2. Number your notes

First, keep a numbered list of the resources you use in your research, either on separate printed or digital note cards, like the one below, or in a single document. Be sure to record the following information:

- Author(s)
- Title
- Location and name of publisher or website name and address
- Copyright date

You will need this information later for your bibliography!



Second, write the number of the resource and then the number of the note card in the upper righthand corner, as in the sample above. Now you will always know which resource you used and the order of the note cards based on that resource.

Third, add the page number where you found the information from the book, magazine, or website. Later, if you need to check your facts, you'll know exactly where to find the original information.

Secrets to Note Taking

SECRET #2: WRITE WHAT YOU NEED

Once you have established your note-taking number system, the second secret to taking good notes is **knowing what you need to write and don't need to write in your notes.**

Not everything you read is going to be important to your topic. Most students make the mistake of trying to take notes the first time they read a book or an article. They waste time taking notes on material they will not use or do not need.

Review the article from Britannica School and highlight these items:

1. The **key words and phrases** that explain what global warming is
2. The **key facts that explain what** the causes are
3. The **key facts that explain why** global warming is a concern
4. The **points that explain how** we can prevent global warming



Scientists made an alarming discovery in the 1980's: the average surface temperature on Earth is slowly increasing. This trend is known as global warming. It is believed to be caused by an increase in the amounts of certain gases in the atmosphere.

Causes

For much of the Earth's history, greenhouse gases were not a problem. This situation changed as people came to depend on fossil fuels (oil, coal and natural gas). People burn fossil fuels to power factories, run cars, produce electricity and heat houses. As fossil fuels burn, they release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

In addition, people have cut down many forests. Trees use carbon dioxide when they make their own food. Fewer trees mean that less carbon dioxide is being taken out of the atmosphere.

Reasons for Concern

Scientists can not tell just how warm Earth may get over time. Some guess an increase between 1.4°C and 5.8°C by the year 2100.

Warmer weather could make glaciers and the polar ice caps melt, causing sea levels to rise drastically. Plants, animals and buildings along the coastline could all be in danger.

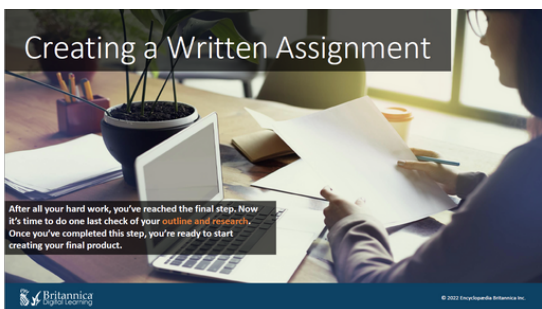
The warmer temperatures might be a welcome change for some people in colder regions. However, people in areas that are already warm might suffer from more heat-related health problems. Likewise, some animals may not be able to take the change to their environment.

STEP 4

Create the Final Task



You have reached the final step! To help you, below are two resources that give advice on how to approach both a presentation and a written assignment.



[Click here for guidance on how to create a written assignment.](#)



[Click here for guidance on how to create an engaging presentation.](#)

Proofreading

Once you have written your final copy, remember to proofread it for errors in punctuation, spelling, and grammar. Read it from beginning to end, checking to be sure your ideas make sense and that your paper flows logically from one paragraph to another.

When you have corrected any mistakes, read the work over again. No one catches everything the first time through. You can also have someone else read it for you or read it out aloud. Sometimes you can be too close to your own work to see the mistakes. You have only one chance to present your project—make it count!

Referencing

Referencing is essential when completing a task or project.

Reasons why you need to reference include:

- acknowledging the use other people's ideas
- aiding readers to find the original works
- supporting arguments
- demonstrating depth and quality of research
- avoiding plagiarism

When do you Reference?

References must be used in the following circumstances:

- when a direct quote is used
- when someone's ideas are summarised
- when someone's else's ideas have been paraphrased
- when a copy of information is used such as a picture, image or diagram

When don't you Reference?

References do not need to be included when using your own ideas or for commonly known facts such as $E=mc^2$

Common Styles of Referencing

APA

APA referencing was developed by the American Psychological Association and is currently in it's 7th edition. **APA** consists of two elements, 1. In-text citation and 2. Reference list.

1. In text citation - must be used every time a quote, paraphrase or summary of somebody else's words or ideas including images, information from the internet, and even tweets or Facebook posts.

2. Reference list - more detailed information of all the items that were cited in your academic work.

HARVARD

Harvard uses an author date system.

The Author Date System: Two Corresponding Parts

1. The in text citation - used in the text where sourced information is used. Includes basic information, such as author, year and the page number. The in text citation provides the reader with information to locate the full reference in the reference list.

2. The reference list entry - gives the full details of the source used, sufficient enough to identify and locate the source.

MLA

MLA or Modern Language Association (MLA) Style Guide uses in-text citations rather than footnotes.

The in-text citations are very brief, and usually include the author's family name and a relevant page number.

The in text citation then corresponds to the full references in the reference list cited at the end of the document.

FACT-CHECKING

Some Tips

1

Choose Wisely

Some sources are better than others. Search and use those that thoroughly review information before publishing it. Use authoritative voices, like scholarly journals or government databases.

2

Trust Expertise

When in doubt about a source, check the author's credentials and qualifications to determine how well he or she knows the subject.

3

Expand your Search

Find more than one source to verify your information. Cast a wide net when searching for information, as well as web search try databases such as Google Books.

Understand Context

Few facts exist outside a broader narrative. Read around the fact to check that it fits into the bigger picture.

4

Proceed with Caution

Question generalisations and anything that appears too good to be true. Consider author motivation. Is the source neutral or does it have a bias?

5

**Britannica
Infographic**

**Fact-checking
Tips from
Britannica**



**Britannica
EDUCATION**

Have questions?

To learn more about Britannica's resources
and how we can support you, please email
contact@eb.com.au or visit **elearn.eb.com**



Britannica
EDUCATION

© 2022 Encyclopædia Britannica Inc.