Internet Research: A Guide to Your Friend, Google.

Research is an important part of your college coursework. No matter the discipline, research will play a central role in your education. From starting your research process to determining the credibility, this handout will help walk you through the process!

How to Start
Identify the vocabulary needed to gather quality results. Start out general to gather a basic understanding of the topic. Use Wikipedia (see the guide down below) and other sources to identify common and recurring words to figure out the vocabulary of the topic. Your research results are only as good as the key word you use to search.

Using Wikipedia as a Research Tool
I am positive you have heard that Wikipedia is not a credible resource. This is true; you cannot cite from Wikipedia directly because the information can be edited by anyone at any time. The information posted is not regularly quality checked. But, you can *use* Wikipedia to jumpstart your research. It contains a wealth of information that will help you in the beginnings of your research!

1. Check out the language being used to discuss the topic you are researching. What are the key words? What is the vocabulary of the topic? Are there specific words that continue to appear throughout the Wikipedia page? Switch out your key words in the Google search bar and watch the magic as new sources appear! Once you have the language needed to research your topic, research becomes much easier.

2. Look at the footnotes: who is cited? Find the writer's info by typing them into your search bar on Google and see if you can check out the direct source.

3. Look at the Bibliography at the bottom; you can click on many of those sources. If it links to another article, read it. See if you can gather any of your sources from there. Check the sources against the questions below and determine their credibility.

DO NOT CITE INFO FROM WIKIPEDIA! Please, lease, for the love of academia, do not cite Wikipedia.

Utilizing the Search Bar
*   Utilize quotation marks to set off phrases that you want to keep together like this: "police violence in America". The quotation marks will keep the phrase together and limit results to articles that contain only that phrase in that order. If you do not utilize quotation marks, it will show you results that contain any of those words in any order (which will lead to articles that

contain the word "police" but not "violence" or "America" but not police). The wider you cast the net and the more general your search terms are, the more results you will get, which means more digging and more work for yourself.

- Utilize "and" or "or" between phrases to make your research more specific. The addition of "and" (for example, "history of police brutality" and "racism in America") will give you articles that are either about "history of police brutality" or "racism in America" but not articles that contain both phrases in the same article.

- Be skeptical of anything that says "Ad" next to it. Businesses pay to be at the top of Google search results, but so do non-profit organizations. Check the source against the questions below to be sure it is a credible source and not an ad trying to sell you something.

Checking Validity: The CRAAP Test

When was it published?
Be aware of when the web page/article was created and how recently it's been updated. Is the information current? Outdated information and broken links indicate the page is not maintained, which means that newer information may be out there.

Who wrote it?
Make sure that the author is a credible resource. Are they a prominent member of their field? If it is a journalist, do they have many other articles on the same topic? Are there credible sources cited within the article: is the author citing prominent and respected people within the field and referring to research and support statements?

Where is it published?
Check the publication. Is it a well-known resource? Have they been around for a long time and have an established reputation? (In the age of the internet, this is important because anyone can create a blog or website and disseminate info). Remember, journalists and news publications spend years building a reputation of reliability and credibility—this doesn't mean that new media sources are not credible, it just means you can rely on NY Times because they have an established history of credibility, and that blog you found may not be as up to date or reliable.

Is the information accurate?
Does the information in this article match other information you have found (consider statistics: are they all pretty much the same or are there big discrepancies)? If you have found a definitive source (meaning, the source that everyone cites as the "correct" info) check the new article against that information. Does it match up? Is it exaggerated? Whether or not an article contains bias is important, but it is also important that the information being presented is as accurate as it can be.

Is there bias present in the article?
Utilize the Media Bias chart to help you here: you want to look for inflammatory language (like extravagant adjectives or hyperbole), look at the title: is the bias apparent? Is there a clear support of one side and bashing of the other side? Look at the images that accompany the article: are the images stock images or are they intentionally "bad," such as showing someone in mid speech or an angry face? Remember, bias comes in from all sides. Here is the media bias chart to check your sources against that I refer to in the video: https://www.adfontemedia.com/interactive-media-bias-chart/?v=402f03a963ba

What is the purpose of the article?
Determine why the article was written. You want to cite articles that are written for educational or informational purposes. You want to avoid articles that are trying hard to sell or contain great bias in a singular direction that is meant to persuade. When an author tries to sell or persuade, they are looking for gain through your belief of the article. Determining how and why an author takes a certain position will help to identify how credible the information is.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

CONSIDER THE SOURCE
Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.

READ BEYOND
Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?

CHECK THE AUTHOR
Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?

SUPPORTING SOURCES?
Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.

CHECK THE DATE
Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.

IS IT A JOKE?
If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

CHECK YOUR BIASES
Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.

ASK THE EXPERTS
Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

IFLA
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
With thanks to www.FactCheck.org

Guidelines for Evaluating Sources

•   Read the preface—what does the author want to accomplish? Browse through the table of contents and the index. This will give you an overview of the source. Is your topic covered in enough depth to be helpful? If you don't find your topic discussed, try searching for some synonyms in the index.

•   Check for a list of references or other citations that look as if they will lead you to related material that would be good sources.

•   Determine the intended audience. Are you the intended audience? Consider the tone, style, level of information, and assumptions the author makes about the reader. Are they appropriate for your needs?

•   Try to determine if the content of the source is fact, opinion, or propaganda. If you think the source is offering facts, are the sources for those facts clearly indicated? If it is a propaganda or an opinion, make sure to acknowledge this in your essay.

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- Do you think there is enough evidence offered? Is the coverage comprehensive? (As you learn more and more about your topic, you will notice that this gets easier as you become more of an expert.)

- Are there broad generalizations that overstate or oversimplify the matter?

- If the source is opinion, does the author offer sound reasons for adopting that stance? (Consider again those questions about the author. Is this person reputable?)

- Ho timely is the source? Is the source 20 years out of date? Some information becomes dated when new research is available, but other sources of information can be quite sound 50 or even 100 years later.

- How credible is the author? If the document is anonymous, what do you know about the organization?

- Are there vague or sweeping generalizations that aren't backed up with evidence? Are arguments very one-sided with no acknowledgement of other viewpoints?

References
https://www.adfontsmedia.com/interactive-media-bias-chart/?v=402f03a963ba

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/evaluating_sources_of_information/index.html

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