LITERACY ACROSS LEARNING

Research Skills Booklet

## This guide will help you with:

Conducting Research Using The Internet

The internet is a wide and varied resource which can provide endless amounts of information on a given topic. While this is a good thing, researching a topic on the internet can be overwhelming.

There are some steps you can take to narrow down the research process and to make sure that you are able to access the best possible information for the research task you are undertaking.

Step 1 – Where to look for information?

A search engine is a great place to start. The most popular one is Google (www.google.com)
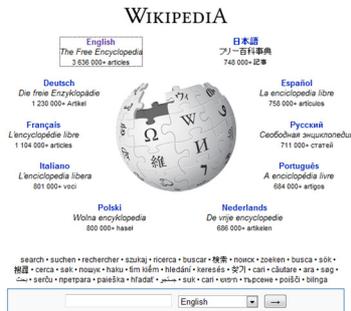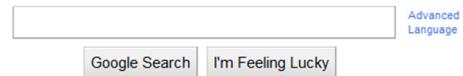
If you want to get a general overview of a topic, Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) is also a good starting point to get an idea about the topic. Remember that you cannot use Wikipedia as a source, as it is a wiki (a website that allows users to add and update content).

Step 2 – What are you researching?

Once you have a general topic, it is important to decide what it is that you need to find out about that particular topic. For example, if you are writing an informative essay about dogs and simply type 'dogs' into a search engine, you would have to read through pages and pages of information before you find what you are looking for.

Wikipedia does offer a more specific menu to help you sort through different sections of each article and this is a good example of how to organise your own ideas.

Clicking on any one of these headings will take you straight to that part of the article.

Additionally, key words (highlighted in blue) will act as a link to other Wikipedia pages on closely related topics

When using Google, think about which terms you might put into a search engine before you go online. Your teacher might have asked you to write a persuasive essay on dangerous dieting, to include information about specific types of eating disorders and statistics about numbers of sufferers.

Google | eating disorder statistics uk   ✕   Search

If you can't find what you are looking for, try being more specific.

Tip – Avoid words like 'a' 'the' 'and' etc as these appear very

Google | deaths from eating disorders uk 2010   ✕   Search

Step 3 – Which websites should you be looking at?

Bigger websites with huge financial power tend to appear at the top of most search results because they have paid good money for this to be the case. Looking at these big websites e.g. Wikipedia, BBC News etc. can be a great starting point as they may refer to other websites and organisations in their articles, which could be your next port of call.

Search results do not depend solely on money. The results which are most specific to your search criteria will appear on first one or two pages of results. Avoid looking at essays already written on your topic as you will need to be able to write a list of where your information has come from and this will be hard to do if the information has come through someone else.

Things to do	**Things _not_ to do**
• Use appropriate search terms. • Check the date and author of the online content you use. Are they up to date and reliable? • Be aware that the web is worldwide. Check that you are not accessing information that is irrelevant in terms of country. • Make a note of every site where you find good information.	• Use content that does not include an obvious author. • Use out of date news articles. • Cut and paste articles and parts of articles into your essay. • Use content that you do not fully understand. Some websites have language or ideas that are not suitable for high school students.

Conducting Research Using Books

First you need to choose the text carefully. Libraries have sections devoted to different areas of interest. This means that you can either access the library's database or ask a member of staff to help you. Look for titles that have keywords relevant to your area of interest.

If you are looking for information on the history of cycling then taking the time to look at the description will help you to identify what is and is not relevant.

Cycling Ireland
By Connellan, Ian
Book. English.
Published Melbourne, Vic. ; London : Lonely Planet 2003
Covering both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, this travel guide includes information on: history, culture, politics, architecture and the...

Will only be relevant to Irish cycling history. It will cover other areas, so will not have a huge amount of relevant information.
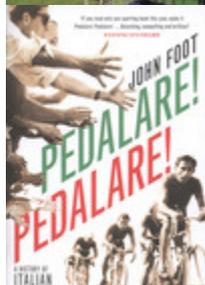
Pedalare! Pedalare!: a history of Italian cycling
By Foot, John, 1964-
Book. English.
Published London : Bloomsbury 2012
Cycling was a sport so important in Italy that it marked a generation, sparked fears of civil war, changed the way Italian was spoken, led to legal reform...

Will only be relevant to Italian cycling history. It will have a huge amount of information and might be enough that this could be a key point of your
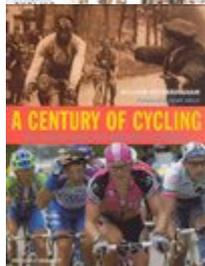
A century of cycling: the classic races and legendary champions
By Fotheringham, William
Book. English.
Published London : Mitchell Beazley 2003
Tracing the history of classic cycle races and of the heroes, villains, scandals and intrigues they have created, this title covers all of the great tours...

This seems perfect and will have a loads of information about various areas.

Cycling
Book. English.
Published London : A. & C. Black 2008
This title contains all you need to know about the sport, including equipment, rules, techniques and training tips. Providing information on how to find...

This will not be relevant to the history of cycling, as it is more about the practicalities.

Once you have found the book(s) you are going to use, you will need to identify the pages to look at. To do this you should consult:

The Contents Page: This is usually located near the beginning of the book and will tell you the way the information of the book has been organised into subject areas.

The Index Page(s):   This is usually located near the end of the book and will tell you the page(s) where key words or topics have been covered in the book.

Conducting Research Using Video

Watching a documentary or a video-clip, either as it is broadcast, or on a site like Youtube can be a very good method of research. Documentaries from broadcasters such as the BBC, ITV or Channel 4 have to be approved before being broadcast, meaning they have to be accurate and will usually give a balanced view of the topic.

ADVANTAGES

- Documentaries can offer you a wide range of opinions on a topic, with quotes from key experts.
- Reliable broadcasters (eg BBC Panorama, Channel 4 Dispatches, BBC Newsnight) broadcast programmes regularly and can be viewed on catch-up services online.
- Watching clips online means you can pause at key moments to take notes.

DISADVANTAGES

- You need to be careful when using sites like Youtube that the clip is from a reliable source. Anyone can upload to the internet, so be wary of content uploaded from an unknown source.
- You will require an internet connection and a TV license, even to watch documentaries on catch-up.
- You will need to be aware of the date a particular clip or documentary was made. Only use up-to-date materials.

Laying Out Your Notes

For the majority of research tasks your teacher will have given you an idea about what categories of information to write/talk about in your final product. However, as you work your way up the school you are expected to organise your own ideas more. These are some ways to help you manage your own research.

Try making a table in which you can jot down short notes.

Dogs

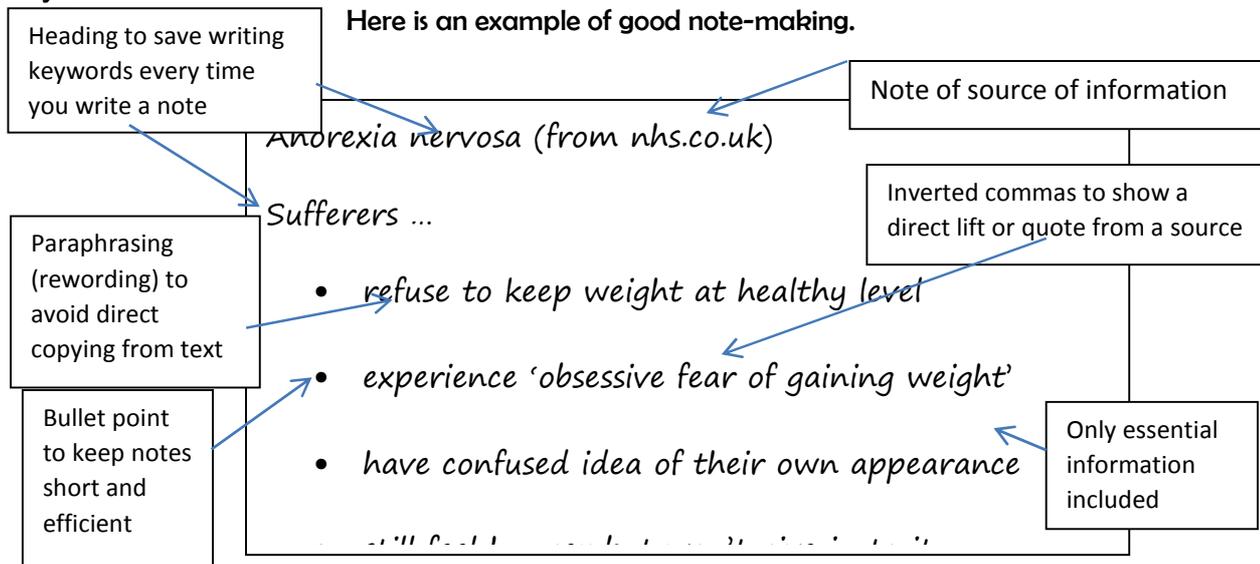| Breeds	Origin	What they eat	Caring for a dog	Why they make good pets

Alternatively, you can make brief notes in a list and then use colour-coding to sort your information into different categories at a later stage.

e.g.
- Dogs have existed for 15,000 years
- They <mark>need regular exercise</mark>

What should you write down?

Writing too much is time-consuming and can lead to copying directly from a source (plagiarism). However, writing too little can also be a problem if you get back to your desk and cannot understand your own notes!

Here is an example of good note-making.

Heading to save writing keywords every time you write a note

Note of source of information

Anorexia nervosa (from nhs.co.uk)

Sufferers …

Paraphrasing (rewording) to avoid direct copying from text

Inverted commas to show a direct lift or quote from a source

- *refuse to keep weight at healthy level*

- *experience 'obsessive fear of gaining weight'*

Bullet point to keep notes short and efficient

- *have confused idea of their own appearance*

Only essential information included

Final Tips:
- if you own the book or if you are working from a photocopy, highlight and underline key ideas as you read.
- personalise your notes with your own words, comments and reactions in the margins of the text. (Do not do this if you are reading a library book!)

Referring To Your Sources

This depends on what type of work you are writing, how you are using the borrowed material, and the task that has been set by your teacher.

You have to think about how you want to identify your sources. If your sources are very important to your ideas, you should mention the author and work in a sentence that introduces your citation. If, however, you are only citing the source to make a minor point, you may consider referencing the source using parenthesis or footnotes.

In the following sections, we will take you step-by-step through some general guidelines for citing sources.

IDENTIFYING SOURCES IN THE BODY OF YOUR PAPER

The first time you cite a source, it is almost always a good idea to mention its author(s), title, and genre (book, article, or web page, etc.). If the source is central to your work, you may want to introduce it in a separate sentence or two, summarizing its importance and main ideas. But often you can just tag this information onto the beginning or end of a sentence. For example, the following sentence puts information about the author and work before the quotation:

Pete Shields III, in an article for New Yorker Magazine, suggests that "The final problem is to make the possession of all handguns and all handgun ammunition - except for the military, policemen, licensed security guards, licensed sporting clubs and licensed gun collectors - totally illegal."

If you have already introduced the author and work from which you are citing, and you are obviously referring to the same work, you probably don't need to mention them again. However, if you have cited other sources and then go back to one you had cited earlier, it is a good idea to mention at least the author's name again (and the work if you have referred to more than one by this author) to avoid confusion.

QUOTING MATERIAL

WHAT IS QUOTING?

Taking the exact words from an original source is called quoting. You should quote material when you believe the way the original author expresses an idea is the most effective means of communicating the point you want to make. If you want to borrow an idea from an author, but do not need his or her exact words, you should try paraphrasing instead of quoting.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I QUOTE?

Most of the time, paraphrasing and summarizing your sources is sufficient (but remember that you still have to cite them!). If you think it's important to quote something, an excellent rule of thumb is that for every line you quote, you should have at least two lines analyzing it.

QUOTING WITHIN QUOTES

When you have "embedded quotes," or quotations within quotations, you should switch from the normal quotation marks ("") to single quotation marks (') to show the difference. For example, if an original passage by John Archer reads:

The Mountain Coyote has been described as a "wily" and "single-minded" predator by zoologist Lma Warner.

your quotation might look like this:

As John Archer explains, "The Mountain Coyote has been described as a 'wily' and 'single-minded' predator by zoologist Lma Warner."

HOW DO I INCLUDE LONG QUOTES IN MY ESSAY?

The exact formatting requirements for long quotations differ depending on the citation style. In general, however, if you are quoting more than 2 lines of material, you should do the following:
- double indent the quotation -- that means adjusting the left and right margins so that they are about one inch smaller than the main body of your paper

For example, a properly-formatted long quotation in a document might look like this:

Scholar Michael Corinaldi makes a similar point about the history of Israel and the Ethiopians:

> "The Israeli government, however, made no attempt to include the Ethiopians in the waves of immigrants that arrived in Israel, and in some cases Ethiopian Jews were forced to go into hiding lest they be deported by the local authorities. This was based on their considerations of how Jewish the Ethiopians were and how easily they could adapt into their new environment."

LISTING REFERENCES

WHAT'S A BIBLIOGRAPHY?

A bibliography is a list of all of the sources you have used in the process of researching your work. In general, a bibliography should include:

Books, Newspapers and Magazines (usually found at the start of the publication)

- the authors' names
- the titles of the works
- the names and locations of the companies that published your copies of the sources
- the dates your copies were published

Websites

- the authors' names
- the titles of the works
- the names of the website
- the date accessed

Broadcasts (usually found at the end of the broadcast or credits)

- the names of the people you are quoting
- the titles of the broadcasts
- the programme creator
- the channel/station it was broadcast
- the date it was originally broadcast
- the date accessed

Film (usually found in the credits)

- the names of the people you are quoting
- the titles of the film
- the film's director
- the distribution company
- the year it was originally released

WHAT ARE FOOTNOTES?

Footnotes are notes placed at the bottom of a page. They cite references or comment on a designated part of the text above it. For example, say you want to add an interesting comment to a sentence you have written, but the comment is not directly related to the argument of your paragraph. In this case, you could add the symbol for a footnote. Then, at the bottom of the page you could reprint the symbol and insert your comment. Here is an example:

This is an illustration of a footnote.[1] The number "1" at the end of the previous sentence corresponds with the note below. See how it fits in the body of the text?

[1] At the bottom of the page you can insert your comments about the sentence preceding the footnote.

When your reader comes across the footnote in the main text of your essay, he or she could look down at your comments right away, or else continue reading the paragraph and read your comments at the end.

Footnotes are not just for interesting comments, however. Sometimes they simply refer to relevant sources -- they let your reader know where certain material came from or where they can look for other sources on the subject.

WHERE DOES THE LITTLE FOOTNOTE MARK GO?

Whenever possible, put the footnote at the end of a sentence, immediately following the full stop. Skip two spaces after the footnote before you begin the next sentence. If you must include the footnote in the middle of a sentence for the sake of clarity, or because the sentence has more than one footnote (try to avoid this!), try to put it at the end of the most relevant phrase, after a comma or other punctuation mark. Otherwise, put it right at the end of the most relevant word. If the footnote is not at the end of a sentence, skip only one space after it.

IF I CITE SOURCES IN THE FOOTNOTES, HOW'S THAT DIFFERENT FROM A BIBLIOGRAPHY?

Sometimes you may be asked to include these - especially if you have cited your sources using parenthesis. Generally it is good practice to include a list of all the relevant sources of information you have accessed during your research, even if they are note directly quoted or referenced in your essay.

Bibliography

Example of bibliography:

Adams, Jocelyn, ed. 30 Great Sci-Fi Stories. New York: Penguin, 1978.

Bibby, George. "The New Tech Bubble." Newsweek Aug 4, 2007: 35-39.

The Encyclopedia Galactica, 2006. Volume 36, "Quasars," pp. 109-111.

Franklin, Joseph and Bobby Smith. The Tyranny of the Masses. San Francisco: Random House, 1998.

Johnson, Sally. The Age of Enlightenment. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

TeenLink: How to Write a Bibliography. 3 Jun. 2004. Rich Gubitosi. 13 Mar. 2008 <http://teenlink.nypl.org/bibliography.html>.

Conducting a Survey

A survey allows you to find out what a range of people think or feel about a particular issue. It is a very useful research method for this reason.

There are four stages to conducting a survey-

- ❖ You need to decide what it is you want to find out
- ❖ You need to decide what you are going to ask
- ❖ You need to decide who you are going to ask
- ❖ You need to process the information once the survey has been completed

Stage 1 – Deciding what it is you want to find out

The data you collect on your survey should always form part of a larger investigation. For example, if you were writing about euthanasia, you would already have researched the legalities and moral issues surrounding this but might also want to find out how people feel about it. A survey allows you to do this.

In order for any survey to be worthwhile, you need to have a really clear idea of what it is you want to find out. Think about the type of questions you need to ask in order to find out about the overall aims of your investigation.

Stage 2 – Deciding what you are going to ask

A good survey will use a mixture of closed and open questions. You will find examples of these in the next section: '*Types of Questions.*'

Closed Questions = Questions which have a 'yes' or 'no' answer or require participants to select and answer from a list – these can be processed into statistics

Open Questions = Questions which allow the participant to give a fuller idea of their views – these can be processed into quotations

Closed Questions might be used to quickly work out the difference in opinion about.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS: These are used to find out how much people know about a particular subject. Eg, "*On a scale of 1 – 10 how much do you know about current drugs laws?*"

FACTUAL QUESTIONS: These should produce yes, no or don't know answers. Eg, "*Are you eligible to vote in the next Scottish parliament election?*"

OPINION QUESTIONS: Used to find out someone's opinion on a topic. These can be open ended (where you record what each individual says at length) or, to be as concise as possible, you may wish to ask people whether they agree or disagree with a given statement.

*Eg, "The trams are a good idea to improve tourists'
experience of Edinburgh."
Do you STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE,
DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE.*

MOTIVATION QUESTIONS: These help you work out the reasons for a particular opinion. Eg, "*If you answered 'yes' to question 2, tick the boxes below that best explain the reason why.*"

QUESTIONS TO AVOID

LEADING QUESTIONS: This is where you show your own feelings about a topic in your question. Eg, "*Like all sensible people, do you agree that 16 year olds should be allowed to vote?*"

PRESUMPTION QUESTIONS: This is where you make an assumption about your respondent. Eg, "How long have you had your current iPhone?" This assumes that everyone has an iPhone.

DOUBLE QUESTIONS: This is where you ask two questions in one; where those two questions may have different answers. Eg, "*Do you agree that the trams are good for tourists and for the people of Edinburgh?*"

JARGON-LADEN QUESTIONS: This is where you use language that may be too complicated to understand for respondents who are not familiar with your topic. Eg, "On a scale of 1 – 10 how far do you agree with the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill?" This assumes knowledge of utilitarianism and of John Stuart Mill.

Stage 3 – Deciding who you are going to ask

In order to get a broad view of what the public think about a given topic, it is important to survey a wide range of people.

Here are some suggested categories-

- Gender (male and female)
- Age (young, middle aged, elderly)
- Nationality (Scottish, English etc)

Try to get at least 3 people from each age group and within that, a mix of male and female respondents.

Stage 4 – Processing the Information

Using the data collected from closed questions, you should be able to calculate the percentage of people who hold a certain view and will then be able to make statements about this

Question - Do you think Scots should be taught in schools?

Out of 9 participants, 5 think that Scots should be part of the education system.

To calculate the percentage, you use the following formula

T = the larger quantity	L = the quantity whose percentage you wish to determine
$\dfrac{T}{L} \times 100 = P\%$	$\dfrac{5}{9} \times 100 = 55\%$

You can also do this to work out percentages of people who share an opinion within gender or age groups e.g. **60% of women surveyed said that sexism still exists in the workplace** or **40% of men intend to vote SNP at the next election.**

With the statements you have collected from open questions, you can include quotations from participants to add interest to your essay and to give a more detailed overview of public opinion.

Question – Why do you think Scots is looked down upon by so many people?

E.g. *"A female participant aged 45 said 'people wrongly think that Scots is just 'slang' as it is used most commonly by people who are not middle-class. This means they sometimes look down on people who use it.'"*

You should aim to include a few quotes for each open question asked, showing different points of view where possible.