



# Doing Research

- ▶ Do you feel overwhelmed when you have to do research for a paper or project?
- ▶ Do you have trouble finding good source material for research papers?
- ▶ Are your notes and sources materials typically unorganized?
- ▶ Are you often unsure if and/or how to cite your sources?

*If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, this InfoGuide is sure to help you be a more confident researcher.*

Whether you're writing a research paper for English, or gathering material for an informative speech in your history class, doing research helps you develop your reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Like anything else in college, it takes practice and patience to get good at it.

*While your professors will determine what your research should look like and include, the tips in this InfoGuide will help you find credible sources, stay organized, and cite your sources correctly.*

## Gathering Sources

**Finding good sources is a large and important part of doing research. Here's what you need to know about gathering sources.**

### Online searches

For many students, Google is the first (or only) step in their research process. But Google doesn't filter by what's most credible or appropriate for academic research. For more reliable results, use Google Scholar—a simple way to search for scholarly literature.

Even better, start with your college library's website. After logging in with your student username, the library website will grant you access to credible online databases and collections of full-text articles and books. Databases to which your college may have access include **Academic Search Complete** and **ERIC**, as well as topic-specific databases.

### Search engine tips

- ▶ Adding quotation marks around your search terms provides results that contain that exact phrase.
- ▶ Typing "or" between two terms gives you results with either of those terms. Typing "and" between two terms gives you only results that contain both.



### The library

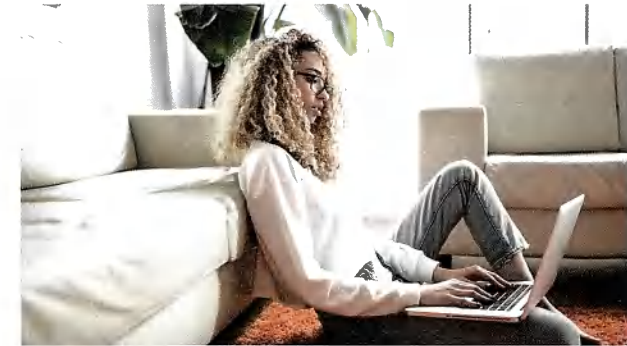
College libraries offer a wealth of research resources—free and within reach. And college librarians are trained to help students with research. If you can't find something, chances are a librarian can.

## Staying Organized

**Organization is the key to making sure your research covers everything you need to cover, and that you have the information you need to correctly cite all of your sources.**

### Organizing your research

- ▶ Before you begin, have an outline of your paper or project ready. Use this outline as a guide for finding and organizing your sources.
- ▶ If you're doing online searches, keep track of all the search terms you've tried.
- ▶ Write down library call numbers and sort them by topic. List which book or chapter pertains to each topic in your paper.



### Keeping track of your sources

- ▶ For online sources, print out each one or store the source info (author, title, web address) in an Excel spreadsheet, Word document, or handwritten record. Make sure to note whether or not you actually use each source in your paper.
- ▶ Use sticky tabs to keep track of relevant pages and passages in library books so that you can easily find them when you need them.

## Avoiding Plagiarism

**Plagiarism is passing off someone else's ideas as your own. Colleges have academic codes and take plagiarism very seriously—and they might not care if it was done unintentionally.**

You should always cite your source if you use someone else's ideas. This applies to quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

- ▶ **Quoting – using someone's exact words.**  
Always put quotes in quotation marks and give credit to the author.
- ▶ **Paraphrasing – putting an idea or a passage from a source into your own words.** You don't have to use quotation marks, but you must still attribute the source.
- ▶ **Summarizing – taking only the main ideas within a source and putting them into your own words.** Like a paraphrase, quotation marks are not required, but you must attribute the source.

**To avoid plagiarizing a source:** In a Word or handwritten document, keep a collection of the summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotes you collect as you read a source. Be sure to put the source at the top of each group so you know where they came from.



## Citing Your Sources

**MLA, APA, and Chicago are the citation styles typically used by college students. Your professor will tell you which to use.**

**MLA** – MLA is commonly used in humanities and liberal arts fields, such as English. An MLA in-text citation for a book looks like this: (Author's last name Page #). For example: (Bell 204). The list of sources at the end of an MLA paper is titled Works Cited.

**APA** – Fields like psychology, business, and education use APA. An APA in-text citation for a book looks like this: (Author, year of publication). For example: (Bell, 2018). If you are citing a direct quote, include the page: (Bell, 2018, p. 204). The list of sources at the end of an APA paper is titled References.

**Chicago** – History and some business fields use Chicago style citations which use footnotes at the bottom of the page to attribute each source. The footnote should contain all source information: 1. First name Last name, Title of Book (Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication), page number. The list of sources at the end of a Chicago style paper is titled Bibliography.

*For additional information on citations and formatting, visit [owl.purdue.edu](http://owl.purdue.edu).*



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