

Using the Web for Research

Student Handout

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Search Tools

Chart of major Web search tools: www.infopeople.org/search/chart.html

Subject Directories

Yahoo!: www.yahoo.com

Librarian's Index to the Internet: lii.org

Academic Info: academicinfo.net

INFOMINE: infomine.ucr.edu

Keyword Search Engines

Alta Vista: www.altavista.com

Seven Steps Toward Better Searching:
webquest.sdsu.edu/searching/sevensteps2001.html

Google: www.google.com

Four NETS for Better Searching (best strategies for using Google):
webquests.sdsu.edu/searching/fournets.htm

Teoma: teoma.com

FAST / AlltheWeb: www.alltheweb.com

HotBot: hotbot.lycos.com

Search Engines Quick Guide (summary of search operators for Google, AllTheWeb, AltaVista, Teoma):

www.infopeople.org/search/guide.html

Meta-Search Engines

Ixquick: ixquick.com

Vivisimo: vivisimo.com

Ask Jeeves!: www.askjeeves.com

Mamma: www.mamma.com

MetaCrawler: www.metacrawler.com

Dogpile: www.dogpile.com

Which Engine Should I Use?

Choose the Best Search for Your Information Need:

www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/information/5locate/adviceengine.html

Specialized Search Engines and Directories:

webquest.sdsu.edu/searching/specialized.html

Evaluating Web Pages

Thinking Critically About World Wide Web Resources:

www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/critical/index.htm

Steve Grant's "Evaluation Short List"...

- *Is this the kind of information I need? Is it valuable for my needs?*
 - ✓ Is it "on target" for my topic? Is it relevant to what I really need to know?
 - ✓ Can I read it well enough to understand it?
- *Sufficient? Enough information to be useful?*
 - ✓ Merely a list of links, or does it have content?
 - ✓ Just a "sampler", or "in-depth"?
- *New information? Anything I don't already know or have from another source?*
- *Who's the intended audience? What's the purpose of this page?*
- *Who wrote it? Why should I believe them?*
 - ✓ If they quote or cite information from other sources, do they cite those sources in such a way that I could go find them if I wanted to?
 - If they're Web sources, author should provide a hyperlink.
 - ✓ Author's job title or credentials?
 - ✓ What else has he/she written?
 - Try doing keyword search on author's name
- *Is contact information with the author provided?*
 - ✓ Hotlink to his/her email is good; snailmail and/or phone is better

- *Is the page associated with reputable institution?*
 - ✓ University, publisher, well-known/respected organization
- *Does the information seem biased? If so, can I still use any of it?*
- *How current is the page?*
 - ✓ Look for date created or revised
- *Do all its hyperlinks work?*
- *Are there spelling and or grammar errors?*

Citing Web Pages in MLA Style

Winsor's "Citing Sources" style guide:

www.winsor.edu/pages/library.cfm
(click "Using the Internet", then "Citing Sources")

- *"One-stop shopping" to citations for all kinds of information sources, including Web and print*
- *Guide for Web pages doesn't match new (1999) MLA official style*
 - ✓ Uses "Dated" and "Viewed"
 - ✓ Uses () instead of < > for URLs
 - ✓ Without "Dated" and "Viewed", and with < > for URLs, probably OK for some high school projects (ask instructor)

"A Guide to Writing Research Papers..." style guide:

webster.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml

- *Covers both print and electronic sources*
- *In-line citations as well as Works Cited (bibliography)*
- *Websites:*
 - ✓ Point at "Citing Sources"
 - ✓ Point & click on "Electronic Resources / Internet"
 - ✓ Scroll past numbered list to "Scholarly Project", "Professional Site", or "Personal Site"
 - ✓ Inline or "parenthetical" citations: scroll farther to "In-text Citation"
- *Harder to use than Winsor, but more thorough and correct*
- *Must use for college and AP-level work*

Citing Styles—Online!: www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html

- *Online sources only (no print)*
- *Clear and MLA-correct*
 - ✓ Also includes APA & Chicago styles
- *Bibliography entries: click “1. World Wide Web site”*
- *In-line citation help:*
 - ✓ Scroll all the way to the top
...or...
Click browser’s “Back” button, then top “MLA Style” box
- *Ideal for AP/college*

NoodleBib: www.NoodleTools.com

- *Subscription required (use your school’s login... or pay for your own)*
- *All print and electronic sources*
- *Complies with latest MLA style*
- *Interactive: builds bibliography for you!*
 - ✓ You fill in the fields, then it generates finished citation
- *Correct formatting & punctuation!*
- *Excellent notations explain each field*
- *Save as Text file to your disk and add/edit later (using NoodleBib)*
- *Save as RTF to open in Word (add to your research paper)*

EasyBib: www.easybib.com

- *Interactive bibliography generator like NoodleBib, but free*
- *MLA style only (APA requires \$5/yr. account)*

- ***Online & print sources***
- ***Saves bib. on Website (NoodleBib—local drive)***
 - ✓ **Have to load by entering 19-character “number”**
 - **Write down or have emailed to you**
- ***Print directly from Web***
- ***Not as clear or thorough as NoodleBib***
 - ✓ **Esp. difficult for online databases that aren’t magazines or newspapers**
- ***Probably OK for most simple, straightforward sources***
- ***Advertising***

Steps in the Research

- **Define and narrow the search problem... exactly what is it you're looking for?**
 - ✓ Identify keywords and concepts
 - Try any of several “graphic organizer” techniques to help discover useful keywords and terms...
www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/torganiz.htm
 - “Clustering” (also called “Concept Mapping”) especially helpful for this
 - Concept maps explained:
www.graphic.org/concept.html
 - Try using *Inspiration* software
 - Quickly draw “concept map” as you brainstorm terms
 - Builds an outline in background while you work!
- **Identify search tools you'll use**
 - ✓ Use “Help” or “Tips” for each tool to learn its particular syntax or techniques
- **Conduct your searches using careful search strategies**
 - ✓ What keywords will zero in on exactly what you want?
 - ✓ What keywords will *exclude* what you don't want? (NOT or “-“)
 - ✓ Should you use a phrase? (“ ”)
 - ✓ Should you capitalize?
- **Evaluate hits and refine search as necessary. For each page you look at...**
 - ✓ Relevant to what I need?
 - ✓ Sufficiently current?
 - ✓ Reliable? Should I believe it's true?
 - ✓ Understandable and clear?

- *Try other search tools if necessary*
- **Select and save or print only pages you've looked through enough to know they're truly useful**
 - ✓ Note URL & date for each page you save/print
- **Consider other sources**
 - ✓ Online databases your school/public library subscribes to
 - Usually avail. from home via the Web
 - Request login from library in person
 - Often quicker to high-quality info.
 - ✓ Library's online catalog to find books(!)
 - May be avail. from home via the Web
 - Reference books w/ great info. may not show up!... Ask librarian to show you some
- **Analyze the information**
 - ✓ Read each page thoroughly
 - What does it emphasize?
 - What information does it contain that the others don't?
- **Take notes on all original documents**
 - ✓ Put away originals and work from notes from now on!
 - Avoid plagiarism
 - Faster than trying to rewrite worse from originals
 - Easier to organize notes than originals
 - Understand the information better

- **Organize notes logically**
 - ✓ Group similar notes together
 - ✓ Arrange so notes flow in a logical progression to explain and support what you want to say
 - ✓ Write outline if helpful (or required)
- **Reach your own conclusions**
 - ✓ What point are you making with all the information you've collected?
 - ✓ Create or refine your theme statement
 - Usually expressed at the beginning of your paper or presentation
- **Write your paper / speaking notes / presentation slides**
 - ✓ From notes, not original documents!
 - ✓ Advantages:
 - Avoid plagiarism
 - Easier to organize notes than full-text documents
 - Understand the information better
- **Cite your sources**
 - ✓ Create a bibliography ("Works Cited") page or screen
 - ✓ Use MLA style (unless teacher specifies another)
- **Evaluate your work**
 - ✓ Is it enough (length, depth)?
 - Is it too long or in-depth?
 - Are there unnecessary elements you should delete?
 - ✓ Clear and smooth? No spelling or grammatical errors?

✓ **Is it the best you can do?**

- **If not, why?**
- **What could you do better next time?**