

Gathering Relevant Information Using Effective Search Terms

When you do research, you need to gather information that is **relevant**, or appropriate, to your research question. This information may come from **print** or **digital sources**. When searching online, it's important to use effective **search terms** to find the specific information you need.

- Use two or three specific keywords, not entire sentences or questions.
- Use quotation marks (" ") around terms with special meaning to get results with the words in that order. For example, to get information about colleges and universities, search with *"higher education"* rather than *higher education*.
- Use "NOT" or a minus sign (-) to exclude words from your search results. For example, to find information about jaguars but not Jaguar cars, search with *jaguar -car*.
- Use "OR" to search for two words at once. For example, to find information about the World Cup in both 2014 and 2018, search with *World Cup 2014 OR 2018*.
- Use "site:" and a domain name to limit your search to certain reliable sites (e.g., .edu, .gov, .org). For example, to find information about meerkats' habitat from academic sites, search with *meerkat habitat site:edu*.

Look at your search results to determine if they will be helpful in answering your research question.

- Read the titles of your search results. Do they seem relevant to your research question?
- Open one of the articles. Look at the headings and text features. Read the first paragraph. Do you think the article can help you answer your research question?

If you answered "yes," look more closely at the source to assess its credibility. Go to the lesson "Evaluating Sources." If you answered "no," you may need to refine your search terms. Remember: Keep refining your search terms until you get good results.

Using Effective Search Terms

Write your research question below. Then use the chart to record your online searches for relevant information.

Research Question: _____

Search Terms	Number of results	Are the results relevant to my research question? Why or why not?

Evaluating Sources

It's important to **assess the credibility** of each source to determine if it is valid, reliable, and trustworthy. You also want to make sure the information is relevant to your research question. Answer these questions to evaluate each source:

- When was the information published? Is it current enough for my research question?
- Does the information help me answer my research question? Is it at an appropriate level – not too basic but not too advanced—for my needs?
- Who is the author? Is the author qualified to write about the topic?
- Does the URL tell me anything about the source (e.g., .com, .edu, .gov, .net, .org)?
- Is the information supported by evidence? Can I verify any of the information in another source?
- What is the purpose of the text (e.g., to inform, persuade, entertain)? Is the information objective and unbiased?

If the source is valid, reliable, and trustworthy, go to the worksheet for the lesson “Citing Sources” and note the bibliographic information so you can create a citation later.

Use the checklist to evaluate each source.

Evaluating Sources Checklist	YES	NO
When was the information published? _____		
Is it current enough for my research question?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the information help me answer my research question?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it at an appropriate level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who is the author? _____		
Is the author qualified to write about the topic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the URL help you know the source (e.g., .edu, .gov)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the information supported by evidence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you verify the information in another source?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is the purpose of the text? _____		
Is the information objective and unbiased?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quoting and Paraphrasing

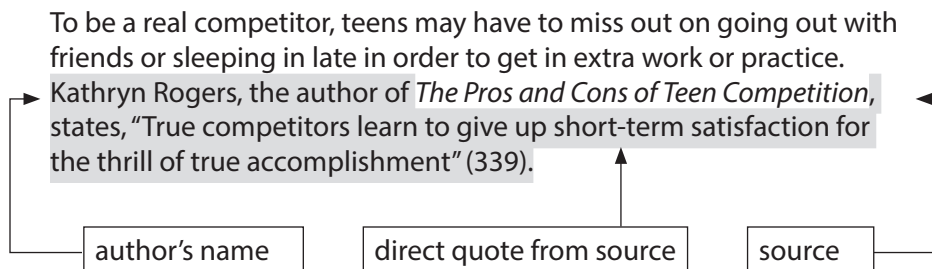
When you are writing a research report, you'll need to include information or ideas from your sources. It's important to avoid **plagiarism**, which is when you use someone else's words as your own. You can include information from your sources by **quoting** it directly or by **paraphrasing** it in your own words.

- When you quote information, you use the same words that are in the text. Use quotation marks around the author's words.
- When you paraphrase information, use your own words to express a text's ideas.

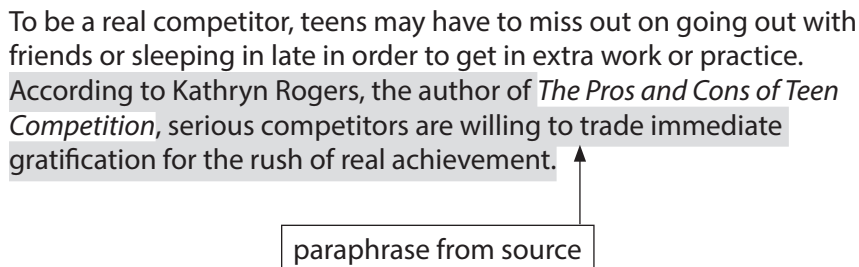
Sentence starters can help you paraphrase and quote information from your sources.

- [Source/Author name] + *states/claims/writes* + "direct quotation" or paraphrased information.
- *According to* + [source/author name] + paraphrased information.

Quoting



Paraphrasing



Quoting and Paraphrasing

Read one of your articles. Quote or paraphrase information that is relevant to your research question. Use the sentence structures to help you.

According to +	source (e.g., The New York Times; the website...) author's name + <i>author of</i> [source] (e.g., Kathryn Rogers, <i>author of The Pros and Cons of Teen Competition</i> ,)	+ “direct quotation” or + paraphrased information
Source + or Author's name +	<i>states</i> <i>writes</i> <i>claims</i> <i>reports</i> <i>points out</i> <i>notes</i>	+ “direct quotation” or + paraphrased information

Quote information from the article that is relevant to your research question.

Paraphrase information from the article that is relevant to your research question.

Citing Sources

When you include direct quotations or paraphrased information in your research report that are not your own thoughts or ideas, you'll need to cite the sources of the information both within the text and on a Works Cited list.

- Include in-text citations within the text of your research report.
- Include full citations on a Works Cited list. Put these citations in alphabetical order by the first word in the citation, ignoring the words *a*, *an*, and *the*.

Using In-text Citations

The most important part of an in-text citation is the author's name. The year of publication is not required.

- Include the author's name in parentheses if he or she is not mentioned in your text.

For young people, "in most cases, experiences lead to developing purpose, not the other way around" (Cook-Deegan).

- Include the author's name and page number if using a printed source, such as a book or magazine.

The author states that "human emotions are messy, involving many brain regions." (Rock, 103)

- Do not include the author's name if you mention it in the text.

Grimm and Miller point out that dolphins are possibly the second most intelligent animals on earth, just after humans.

Creating a Works Cited List

Full citations for your sources should be included on a Works Cited list. There are free websites you can use to create citations. Here are some common types of citations.

- **Books**

Paulsen, Gary. Hatchet. Bradbury Press, 1987.

- **Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers**

Duckett, Maryellen Kennedy. "Nature Makes a Comeback in Mozambique." National Geographic, Nov. 2021, p. 30.

- **Article on a Website**

Grimm, David and Greg Miller. "Is a Dolphin a Person?" Science, 21 Feb. 2010, <https://www.science.org/content/article/dolphin-person>.

- **Page on a Website**

Johnson, Whitney. "Building Trust with Meerkats." National Geographic, www.nationalgeographic.com/search?q=meerkats&location=srp&type=manual. Accessed 26 Oct 2022.

Citing Sources

Note bibliographic information for each source. Later, create a citation.

Bibliographic Information:

Title: _____

Author: _____

Source Type: _____ Print or Digital: _____

Date of Publication: _____ Page #(s): _____

Citation:

Bibliographic Information:

Title: _____

Author: _____

Source Type: _____ Print or Digital: _____

Date of Publication: _____ Page #(s): _____

Citation:

Bibliographic Information:

Title: _____

Author: _____

Source Type: _____ Print or Digital: _____

Date of Publication: _____ Page #(s): _____

Citation:

Bibliographic Information:

Title: _____

Author: _____

Source Type: _____ Print or Digital: _____

Date of Publication: _____ Page #(s): _____

Citation: