

Project research skills

Finding and Using Information for projects such as EPQs, IBs, A and AS levels, BTECs, and extended essays.



Once you have your topic/title; what next?

- Consult a dictionary or thesaurus
 - Browse popular subject magazines such as New Scientist and National Geographic
 - Search online * using keywords and search terms
 - Define, limit or narrow your search:
 - You could apply a geographic limit by country or region.
Or, you could limit by year, date or era
 - Search school, public, or university libraries' catalogues
 - Arrange to visit
- *Check out our list of free open access resources

Search tips:

Think about your topic

Using Coca Cola as an example research topic:

- What keywords can you think of that are associated with this topic?
- Think of as many ways as you can to describe the topic.
- Use a thesaurus if necessary to find alternatives.
- Go to the next slide for some suggestions.

Search tips:

Keywords and synonyms

- Carbonated, fizzy, sparkling, caffeine, caffeinated
- Pop, soft drink, mixer, beverage
- Aluminium, can, tin, ring pull
- Cylinder, vessel, container
- Red, white, logo, advertising, Christmas, Americana
- Recyclable materials, food packaging

Search tips:

Be aware of UK / US variant spellings

- Organisation / organization
- Aeroplane / airplane
- Behaviour / behavior
- Colour / color
- Encyclopaedia / encyclopedia
- Litre / liter
- Metre / meter
- Catalogue / catalog
- Centre / center
- Analogue / analog
- Grey / gray
- Analyse / analyze
- Judgement / judgment
- Liquorice / licorice
- Tumour / tumor
- Monologue / monolog
- Theatre / theater

Search tips: Truncation

To increase your search results, consider using the stem of a keyword and add an asterisk to bring back variations, eg

Recycl* = recycle, recycling, recycles, recyclable.

Advert* = advert, adverts, advertising, advertisement.

Some open online resources



More information about these resources and more on the project research process handout

Visiting an academic library 1/2

A university library visit can give you:

- A taste of life at university
- An opportunity to develop independent research skills
- A chance to get advice from library staff
- Access to books and other materials for your project.

Visiting an academic library 2/2

Before your visit:

- Check the library website for details about how to arrange your visit.
- Look up location and opening hours
- Check if you will be able to access wifi, PCs, scanners or photocopiers.
- Check that the library covers your subject.

Next steps

Once you have found some useful material, you will need to evaluate it.

Ask the following questions:

What is the focus of the work?

- Who produced it?
- Why, and when, was it written?

What is plagiarism?

“Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. [...] Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional.”

(Oxford University,
<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>)

Referencing

- To avoid plagiarism you must acknowledge the sources you've used in your project by referencing them, usually in a bibliography.
- This helps readers identify your sources of information and shows the extent of your research.

Good luck with your project!

