

How to do an internet research

We all know that the internet is a great resource, but it also has sites or webpages that may have a certain perspective on the subject matter.

So here are some tips on how to find information on the web based on various websites searches

1. Use a recognised search engine

Government websites ending in **.gov** sometimes it can also be **.gov** and the international abbreviation code for that country e.g. **gov.uk**

Education websites end in **.edu** are colleges

Non-profit organisations end in **.org**

Media sources may also be useful but remember to check if it is a factual or an opinion piece from a reported or columnist. How do you know the information quoted is correct and accurate? You can check to see if the same information is reported on other sites. Do not be taking in by the headlines or the graphics.

Social media sites are more likely to give personal opinions or may even be a social influencer paid to promote content in a certain way or say certain things and they may or may not disclose they are doing this. Equally there could be links to companies or websites that are promoting a certain agenda. These links could be explicit or maybe hidden. Also just because a post has been shared hundreds or thousands of times does not necessarily make it true and you should think carefully before you repost something else if you are not able to confirm it is correct or it has context that might be considered illegal as it could have legal consequences if you repost it.

However bear in mind anyone can set up websites or social media posts that may look like there are legitimate, also open data sources such as Wikipedia etc. can be edited by anyone so some of that information could be changed or may not be factually correct. You can also look at the reference section to see what sources were used so you can look at the original source. You can check the name of the website or the name of the account e.g. **@camdencouncil** is the correct twitter feed for Camden, **@teamcamdencouncil** is not but it could use the same branding – Camden council emails all end in **.gov.uk** but if they ended in **camden@gmail.com** it would not be an official account and could be someone trying to pass on wrong information or get access to data they should not have.

2. Look for subject specific websites or databases

3. You could ask a librarian at your local reference library or another adult to recommend a source they trust and use.

4. Look at more than one website

The first in the list does not necessarily mean it is the most relevant - remember the search engine will deliver results based on an algorithm or who paid to have their information promoted and some websites may only show some of the information you need. It might show one keyword followed by not the other keyword. You may also wish to use a different search engine to see if it gives different results.

5. Choose your keywords carefully, use alternative keywords.

You can use **AND**, **OR** or **NOT** to narrow down your search

Use **AND** between two terms and it will include both the keywords e.g. Cheese and France

Use **OR** between two keywords and it will include one of more of those terms e.g. feminism or feminist

Use **NOT** to exclude keywords from your search so if your say NOT USA it would exclude website that talk about the USA.

Use **quotation marks** to search for an exact phrase – but be aware this might exclude similar terms with slightly different key works “animal farm” is likely to get result where this term is used rather than sites about animals or farms.

Use specific keywords if you want to search for a certain thing e.g. George Orwell's Animal Farm

Use alternative words (use a thesaurus / dictionary) to look up other similar words e.g. academic achievement or, education achievement or just achievement.

6. Keep a list of where your searched (copy the URL or web address by highlighting the address and then cut and paste or use Ctrl C to copy and Ctrl V to paste. You can record your searches in a bibliography

Other things you may want to check for are:

Who is the website / social influencer affiliated to / sponsored by or have links to may not be as unbiased, it may not always be possible to decide if the information is being presented on behalf of another other organisation with an agenda? Is there an about us source on the website that's says who they are and where they are based. Not all websites will say who sponsors the information so it helpful to be sceptical and look for way to verify the information on the website.

Bear in mind if you look at a website and it suggests a link to another website or information source it more than likely to support the views of the original website, they may not give alternative or conflicting views.

Does the author of the article or webpage have any qualifications related to the subject? This may add more weight to their arguments.

How up to date is the information, views, research, and understanding can change over time. The more recent the article is the more relevant it might be but equally an article or a piece written at a certain time could give an insight into the situation as it was then.

Can you identify bias in how the article is reported in terms of the wordings and phrases used as they may be written with a certain idea or view in mind.

Has the information read confirm or contradict your thoughts about the subject search? Does this change your view? Confirmation bias may make you more likely to believe views that match your own views. You may assume that any report on a topic you believe is true or dismiss any views that others may give as incorrect. There are people who believe that the earth is flat and that pictures of the earth as a sphere are fake.

Webpages do change and are regularly archived so you might want to print or take a screen print of the webpage. Or make a pdf of the page to save in your research file.

Do not copy websites or articles and pass them off as your own, this is called plagiarism and can have consequences and other people may spot or recognise it, you can use quotes to refer to it and then indicate the source of the quote, who said what, or where it was written and then refer to it in the bibliography.

Also be aware that politicians may not always tell the truth or may provide partial or misleading information that serves their purpose, and some claims they make may have to be fact checked.

Bibliography are a great way to look at the source of information on the web. They tend to have a format of:

Author, title, and the year published and for web searches you can add their web address as well.

Bibliography

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