



Choosing the Right Resource – A Guide to Research

The ability to conduct research is not just a skill for school. Your ability to find quality information, when you need it, will be an important skill you will use throughout your life. Information exists in many forms. Determining what type of information you need, and where to find it, is a vital skill.

1. Choose – the appropriate resource
2. Search – for information and data
3. Evaluate – the resource critically
4. Cite – the resource correctly

Resource Type	When/why to choose
Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require thoughtful, deep analysis & broader scope</i> • Deep and thoughtful analysis (they take a long time to write, will have been carefully and critically edited) • For this reason not great for very current events • Thoughtful analysis of the significance of events or issues takes time • Books often broad in scope
Reference Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require specific types of information</i> • Overview of a subject/issue/event • Data • Not meant to be read cover-to-cover but consulted for specific information • Large variety: almanacs, atlases, bibliographies, biographical sources, catalogs, concordances, dictionaries, directories, discographies and filmographies, encyclopedias, glossaries, handbooks, indexes, manuals, research guides, union lists, yearbooks
Almanacs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require a specific piece of information</i> • Great for “lists” – tallest buildings, longest rivers, timelines etc • Usually arranged by subject or broad category • Traditionally predict the weather based on astronomy
Encyclopedias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require a good, general overview of an event, subject or issue</i> • Can be very general, or subject specific • Excellent to consult when an overview of a subject is required
Dictionaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require information about a word</i> • Word spelling, pronunciation and definition (sometimes first use)
Directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require contact information for a person or organization</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of people and how to contact them
Thesaurus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require a synonym for a word</i> • A dictionary of word synonyms
Atlas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require geographical information</i> • Geography – maps and gazettes
Journal Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require peer reviewed, credible information on current subjects/issues or to obtain information on academic studies</i> • Can be published weekly, monthly, 6x a year etc • More current than books, but less deep analysis • Shorter • Often “Peer reviewed” – means that someone else who knows about that subject/issue has edited the piece • Accessed through an online database (passwords required)
Newspapers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require local, current information</i> • Very current – they usually are published daily • Local information • Sometimes accuracy is sacrificed for speed
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require information quickly, but be wary of quality of the information</i> • Easy to access, usually free (but not always) • Difficult to evaluate for quality, accuracy, coverage etc. • Information can be very comprehensive, or very incomplete • Reading level required varies greatly
Advertisement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require information on popular culture or marketing/consumerism</i> • Advertising has much to reveal about our culture • Very accessible
Blog/podcast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require anecdotal information about a person or subject, often reflecting writer’s values</i> • Very trendy! • Stream of consciousness • Spontaneous • Lack careful editing • Often more about feeling and perception than fact • Sometimes sweeping generalizations
Pamphlet/brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require useful, practical, concise information on a subject</i> • Can contain excellent information that is sometimes difficult to otherwise obtain • Carefully put together • Designed for wide distribution • • Designed to inform accurately • Usually published by institutions
E-mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require a record of correspondence</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used as a record of events • More informal than traditional letters • People tend to think less before writing an email as compared to a letter
Film/TV Show/Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require information on media</i> • Wonderful record of popular culture • Other related information also important (how many people say the film, did it influence other films, how many people bought the record)
Government Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require official information on government services, programs and policies</i> • Official • Carefully put together • Well researched
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require a first-hand account of an event or issue, or an individual story or opinion</i> • Sometimes the best information comes from the source • People are extremely valuable sources of information • First-hand account of events
Letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require a record of correspondence</i> • Exchange of information between individuals or institutions • Contain much information • Can be formal or informal
Diary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require a personal account of an event or issue that was created at that time</i> • Very valuable primary resource • Created at the time of the event/era • Tell the story of individual people and their families • Often only the story of the “big players” is preserved, so access to how ordinary people coped is both rare and irreplaceable
Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require information about the policies and activities/events related to an organization</i> • Serial publications, meaning they are published frequently • Very good for information on organizations • More often informal in nature • Packed with information on activities, events, personnel etc. associated with the organization
Press Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require official information on a subject or event</i> • Often a press release is created in response to some event/issue • Time sensitive – when a press release is issued and what information it contains is very important • Sometimes information is released that later turns out to be incorrect
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use when you require numbers to support your thesis</i> • Statistics • No analysis, just the numbers

