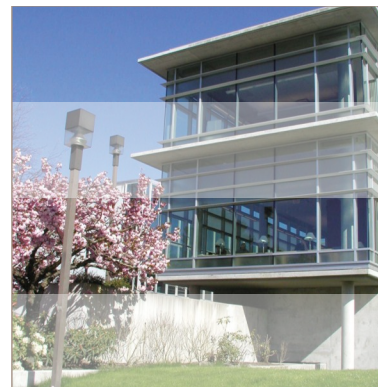


# RESEARCH TIPS

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

BCIT LIBRARY

[bcit.ca/library](http://bcit.ca/library)



## Getting Started



### CHOOSING A TOPIC

If possible, choose your topic from a list created by your instructor.  
Choose something you are interested in.  
Discuss your potential topic with your instructor.  
Do some background research to get ideas.

### FINDING BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Check general and specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries from the Library's print and electronic reference collection. Your textbook may also be a good source.  
Browse the shelves in the library to see what books are available.  
[Ask a Librarian](#) and check the [Library's Subject Guides](#) for sources of background information.  
Start a list of **keywords** that are used to write about your topic; this will help when you search for information.  
Do a quick search of the catalogue and online databases using your keywords; this will help refine your topic.

### REFINING YOUR TOPIC

If you are finding too much information about your topic it may be too **broad**; make it more specific.  
If you **are not** finding enough information about your topic it may be too **narrow**; make it more general.  
A shorter paper or presentation should have a narrower topic than a longer one.  
Try making your topic into a question. For example: Do cell phones cause adverse health effects?  
Create a **thesis statement** - a one or two sentence summary of your argument or analysis.

<b>Too Broad</b>	Depression
<b>Too Narrow</b>	Cognitive stimulation therapy as a treatment of depression in the elderly with dementia
<b>Good</b>	Forms of therapy in the treatment of elders with depression

## Finding Information

### CHOOSING RESOURCES

You need enough resources to support your argument or cover your topic.  
Include a variety of viewpoints and materials.

The [Library's Website](#) is a good starting point for choosing resources.  
Use the [Online Catalogue](#) to find books and media and journals by title.  
Use [Online Databases](#) under Search to find articles in magazines and journals.  
[Weblinks](#) provides useful links.  
[Subject Guides](#) give an overview of resources on a variety of topics.

Source	Good for
<b>Web</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Addresses &amp; phone numbers</li><li>&gt; Company information</li><li>&gt; Government documents</li><li>&gt; News</li></ul>
<b>Magazines &amp; Journals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Up-to-date research</li><li>&gt; Specific topics</li><li>&gt; Current information</li><li>&gt;</li></ul>
<b>Books &amp; Videos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Broad overviews</li><li>&gt; In-depth discussions</li></ul>

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## SEARCHING

Theses statements and background information are good sources of keywords for searching

Use the **subjects** in online catalogue records and **citations** in online databases to find more keywords.

Use wildcards to search different endings for words at the same time. For example: in the online catalogue engineer\* searches engineer, engineers and engineering

Combining keywords with **and** narrows a search. Combining keywords with **or** broadens a search.

Use footnotes and references to lead to additional sources of information.

## EVALUATING INFORMATION - SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK

Is it relevant to your topic?

Are there critical reviews of it?

How was the information obtained?

Are conclusions supported by evidence?

What are the author's qualifications?

Are there footnotes or a bibliography?

When was it published?

Who is the intended audience (scholarly or popular)?

Who published it?

Is it consistent with other sources?

### Scholarly Journals versus Popular Magazines

Scholarly journals include articles written by researchers in a field of study and are intended for an audience with a background in that field. Articles are often peer reviewed and include references.

Popular magazines include articles written by professional writers and are intended for a general audience. Articles are assigned by editorial staff and often do not include references.

## Completing Your Project

### WRITING YOUR PAPER OR PREPARING YOUR PRESENTATION

Start by creating an outline.

Proofread your paper for style and logic as well as grammar and spelling. Practice your presentation in front of a group of friends.

The Library has created a [Research Guide to Communications](#) to lead you to further information.

### CITING YOUR SOURCES

Every time you use information that is not your own research and is not common knowledge you must cite your source. This includes ideas and opinions, as well as facts.

Citing sources gives support for your argument, lets readers check to your information and gives credit to people whose ideas you have used.

Whenever you use another author's words you must place them in quotes.

Know the style you should be using for your paper. Handouts summarizing the [APA](#) and [MLA](#) styles are available in the Library and on the web.

Create a bibliography or reference list at the end of your paper.

## Finding More About Doing Research

[Duke University Libraries: Guide to Library Research](http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/home.htm) - <http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/home.htm>

[Indiana University Bloomington: Writing Tutorial Service](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets.shtml) - <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets.shtml>

[Kwantlen University College Library: Term Paper Research](http://www.kwantlen.ca/library/guides/termpaper.html) - <http://www.kwantlen.ca/library/guides/termpaper.html>

[Langara College Library: Learn To Do Research](http://www.langara.bc.ca/library/reshelp/reshelp.html) - <http://www.langara.bc.ca/library/reshelp/reshelp.html>

[University of Minnesota Libraries: QuickStudy: Library Research Guide](http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/) - <http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/>