

ONLINE SEARCH STRATEGY

TASK DEFINITION

- Get some basic info on topic
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
 - https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Get keywords
 - Think of different ways of saying your topic
 - Google: synonyms of ...
 - <https://images.google.com/>
- Evidence
 - What *type* of evidence do you want? (include these words in search)
 - facts, examples, definitions, quotes, artefacts, images, data and statistics
 - Primary source, secondary source
 - database, links, archives, collection, reference, research, museum, journal, graph, table and letter

STRATEGIES

- Start broad, get narrower
- Learn *from* the search. Change what you are searching for based on what you find after you start searching
- Stepping stones method – search for something, when you find more information about it, use that to change your search, to make it more specific
- Be ready to stop a search if it is taking you in the wrong direction
- After you search, check the whole page of results, only if they are all or mostly related to what you want should you continue, otherwise, change what you search for

LOCATION AND ACCESS

- Lots of different types of websites: scholarly works, databases, archives, references sources and information pages.
 - Most common student mistake is to only use information pages instead of reference sources

CREDIBILITY OF A SOURCE

- Is the content **relevant**? Is it useful for my purpose? Does it contain links to other relevant sources? Is it at an appropriate reading level?
- Is the source **believable**? What type of source is it (published or official sources are better)? Who is the author (experts are better)? When was it published (newer is better, usually)? Is the source unbiased, or at least balanced? Does it say where it gets its information from?
- Is the source **true**? Is it backed up by other sources? Does it *sound* right? Does it fit in with other things you know (assuming you have knowledge of the subject)?
- Most important factor for credibility is if a source says where it got its information from

GOOGLE TIPS

- every word matters
- order matters
- capitalisation doesn't matter
- punctuation doesn't matter
- more specific search terms are better – go from broad to more specific as you learn more while searching
- use 'Boolean' operators: AND, OR, NOT
- a search with "filetype:" will find specific files. e.g. "trenches filetype:ppt" will find PowerPoint files about the trenches
- a search with "site:" will find things *within* a website.. For example: "samurai site:tnm.jp" will find samurai related material from the Tokyo National Museum website
- use the tabs along the top for different types of results such as images, new, videos, maps and books
- use a hyphen to exclude words and narrow your search. For example "knights -newcastle" will find information about medieval knights, not a sports team
- search for a range of numbers using "..". For example, "2001..2004" searches between 2001 and 2004. "..2004" searches before 2004. "2004.." searches after 2004.
- An asterisk acts as a wildcard. So, for example, "teen*" will return results with any of the words teen, teens, teenager etc. in them
- use exact phrase searching by putting speech marks around a search to find exact text (which, incidentally, is an easy way to check for plagiarism in a student assignment)