

Researching an assignment

Academic writing II.

What is the purpose of doing research for an assignment?

Research is a way to learn more about something, its not simply to reinforce what you already knew and understood

Research is not about reaching perfection – its about doing the best job you can with the resources available

Research is about selecting the information you need out of the information available

Identifying key words, phrases, underlying themes, while understanding the scope of the assignment is key to efficient research

How to do research for an assignment

- Depends on the assignment
- Do not waste time gathering information that is irrelevant
- Be strategic: you need to quickly gain a sense of the information available, how it relates to your task, and how valuable it is for completing the assignment
- You need to be prepared to change direction as you learn new information
- Move from the general to the specific: text books/notes/articles --> review articles --> research articles

Three key questions to think about

- What resources (books, articles, peer-reviewed journals etc.) are available for the completion of the task?
- How/where can you find the resources?
- How can you judge whether what you have found is suitable?

Search profile for a literature review

- Scope (level, dates, languages, country): for example – Authoritative online and offline sources. Review articles within the last five years. The newer and more authoritative, the better. English and Hungarian. UK, US, Hungary.
- Exclusions: what are you NOT going to look at/study?
- Key words connected to the research topic
- Known references: sources you already know you should look at
- Notes

How to know if something is a good source?

RABT

Relevant?

Authoritative?

Balanced or biased?

Timely?

- Relevant: does it focus on issues that are part of the task? Is it general or specifically about a part of the task? Ex: appropriate age group or geographic location
- Authoritative: is it a reliable source? Are the authors well known, credible, or from an organization that is recognized in the field. Does the publication give sources for its information?
- Balanced or biased?: does it seek to fairly present all sides of an argument? Is it biased towards a particular point of view? Is the publication/research sponsored by a person or organization that takes a stance on that view? Why was the publication written?
- Timely?: is it still relevant information? How up to date is it? Are there new findings since publication that mean the conclusions are outdated?

Primary and secondary sources?

- Primary source: a publication in which original research/ideas are first communicated. Ex: research papers in peer-reviewed academic journals and conference papers
- Secondary source: a publication that reports on, summarizes, reviews primary sources

What to use other than AI?

- Google Scholar: free to use search engine for scholarly sources
- Bibliographic databases: some are open access, some are not but your university or library may have access to them
- Library: Not just for books, newspapers and magazines! Access to digital material only available through other libraries or institutions. Subscriptions to online databases, archives, or journals. Access to historical or older records that are not available online.

