

Quick Reference for Conducting Research and Evaluating Information

Follow the steps outlined below to become a first-rate researcher. Remember the word **TREE**:
T (*topic and search strategy*), **R** (*retrieval*), **E** (*evaluation of information*), and **E** (*ethical use of information*).

Topic and Search Strategy Formulation:

- Locate and use background information
- Identify search terms
- Understand the differences in types of resources
- Select search tools

Retrieval:

- Be able to locate an item in the library by its call number
- Search a library database, using Boolean operators (and, or, not), and set limits
- Use database features such as printing/saving/marking/emailing/accessing full-text
- Interlibrary loan information as needed

Evaluation:

- Evaluate information based on criteria (*see opposite*)
- Recognize the difference between popular and scholarly (peer-reviewed) resources
- Refine strategy and conduct a new search when results are unsatisfactory

Ethical Use of Information:

- Use appropriate documentation style to cite sources

Evaluate information based on criteria:

Evaluation of information is especially important for resources found on the World Wide Web, but the following criteria is useful in evaluating information from all types of resources in all types of formats.

Use the following questions to evaluate information:

Is the information relevant to your need?
Does the context apply to your situation?

What is the authority for the information?

Is the information valid?

Has it been through a peer review process?

Is the information current?

Is it reliable and accurate?

Does the person/group presenting the information consider different points of view or indicate a bias?

Is it from a popular or scholarly resource?

If this process does not provide you with the information you want, then you may need to reformulate your topic and/or search strategy and try again!



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