Canberra High School

Research Skills Booklet

The aim of this booklet is to show you how to tackle assignments. It's your guide on where to start, and the steps to follow.
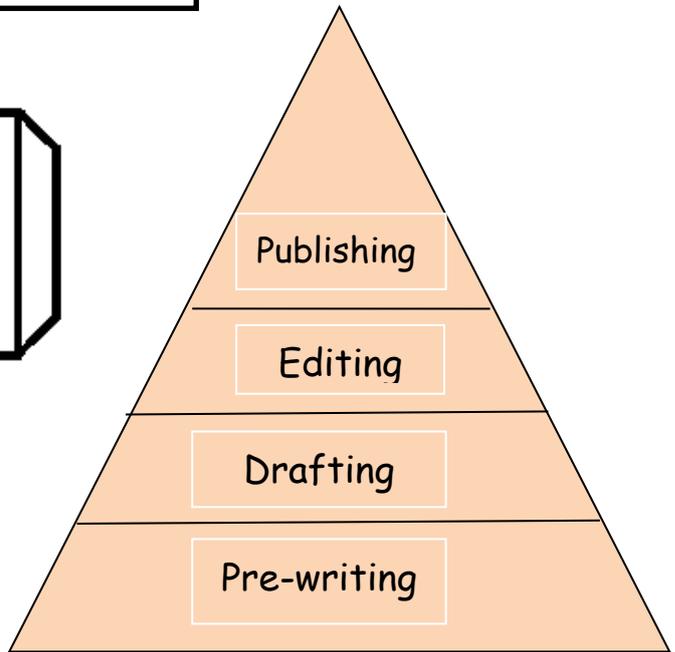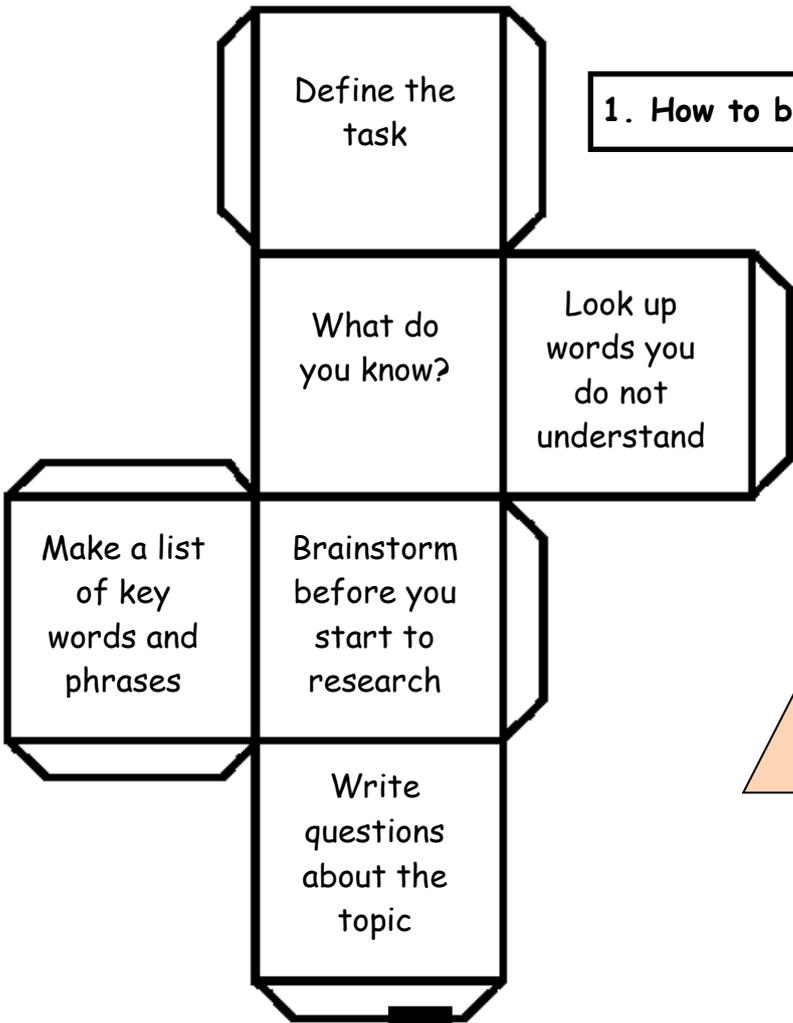
- Start assignments early
- Set goals
- Do small amounts of study frequently

Contents

How do I do research?

Define the task

What do you know?

Look up words you do not understand

Make a list of key words and phrases

Brainstorm before you start to research

Write questions about the topic

Publishing

Editing

Drafting

Pre-writing

4. How do I organise and use my information?

2. How do I locate information?

Class work and resources

Different websites, search engines

Library

YouTube, documentaries

Encyclopedia

graphic organisers

bibliography

skimming and scanning

summarising

paraphrasing
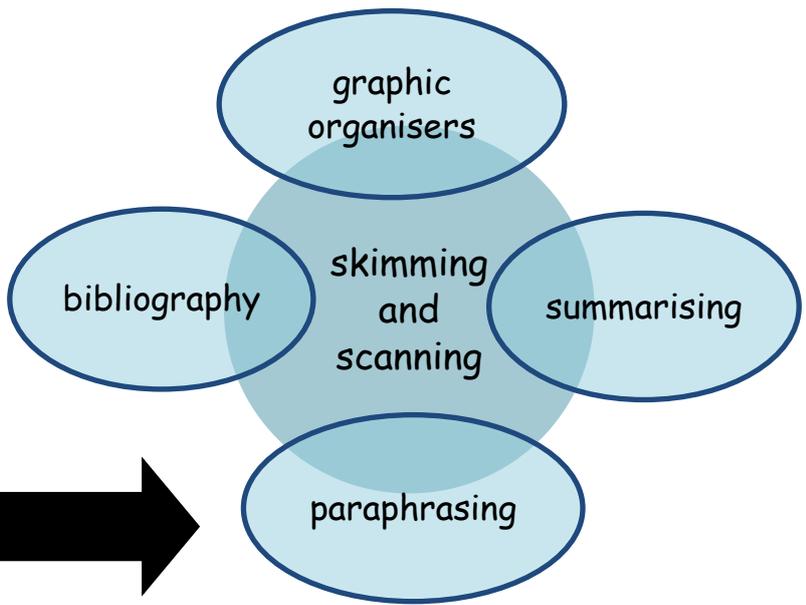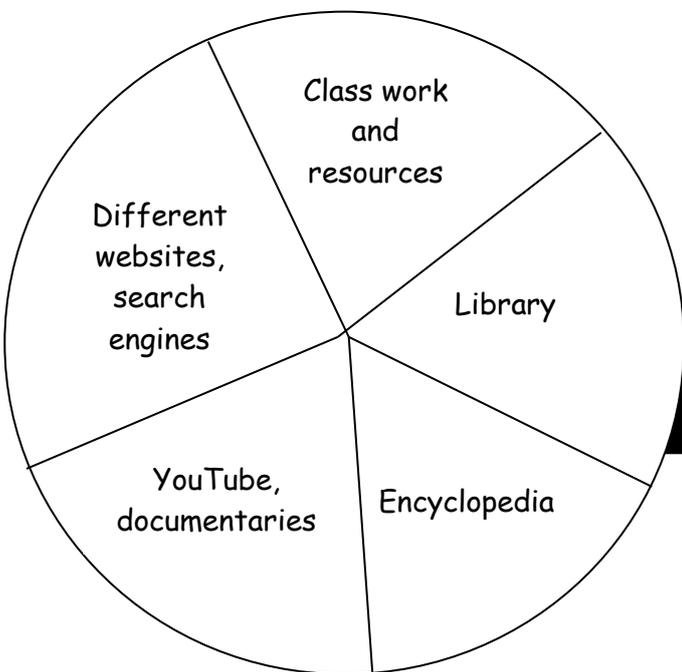
3. How do I select and record my information?

Assignment Goal Planner

Subject: .... Assignment Name:...

Date due: Week .... Day .... Date ....   Worth: ....%

Set a Goal	The Process	Do by	✓ Done
Read the assignment task	**Defining the task** Understand the topic. Look up words you do not understand. List key words and phrases. Write questions about the topic. Discuss ideas in class.		
Gather your information	**Locate the information** Search sources: class material, the library, the Internet – different search engines, YouTube. Skim, scan, read sources. Brainstorm, make notes. Use graphic organisers.		
Take your notes	**Selecting and recording information** Skim and scan resources. Take notes. Summarise, paraphrase, use own words. Collect quotes. Record details for bibliography.		
Begin pre-writing	**Organising the information** Organise notes and research into categories. Highlight/colour code important information. Use templates to plan your draft.		
Begin drafting and editing	**Writing the assignment** Create first draft using assignment and rubric. Edit for missing information, grammatical and spelling errors. Have someone edit the re-draft. Include pictures, references, headings.		
Create your polished copy	**Completing the polished copy** Review draft feedback. Check referencing, complete bibliography. Create polished copy. Hand in on time.		

Note: Goals 2,3 and 4 are not necessarily sequential. Often when completing assignments you move back and forth. You start to write then find you need more information.

Step 1: Where do I begin?

A. Begin by defining the task

1. Write the due date in your diary,
2. Have your assignment in front of you.
3. Scan it to become familiar with its layout.
4. Skim it for key words and ideas about the topic.
5. Have a pencil, eraser or pen at hand.
6. Read the assignment more closely.
7. Make notes in the margins as you read.
8. Underline key words and unfamiliar words, look up the definitions and synonyms, write these close to the word, use personalised symbols if you have developed your own such as:
   - a '?' if you don't understand something.
9. Ask questions about the topic.
10. Summarise what you're being asked to do.
11. Rewrite the topic in your own words.
12. If you are unsure about any details:
    a. ask your teacher for clarification,
    b. discuss it with a parent/guardian/peer.
13. Make a plan or a timeline to keep you on track.

B. How do I gather ideas?

Begin gathering ideas about the topic as soon as possible as this helps to focus your thinking. You could:
- Ask and write questions about the topic and what you need to find out.
- Write down keywords; these could be good search terms.
- Brainstorm your ideas on graphic organisers such as a KWL chart or concept map (see page 6).

How do I brainstorm for an assignment question?

Sample Assignment Question:

Why was the samurai class of Shogunate Japan given a privileged position in society?

For example: What are your key words and phrases?

- Shogunate Japan samurai
- feudal Japan class system
- role of samurai
- Shogunate Japan samurai privileges
- Shogunate Japan samurai rights
- life of a samurai in medieval Japan
- samurai warrior Feudal Japan
- position of samurai
- samurai social status
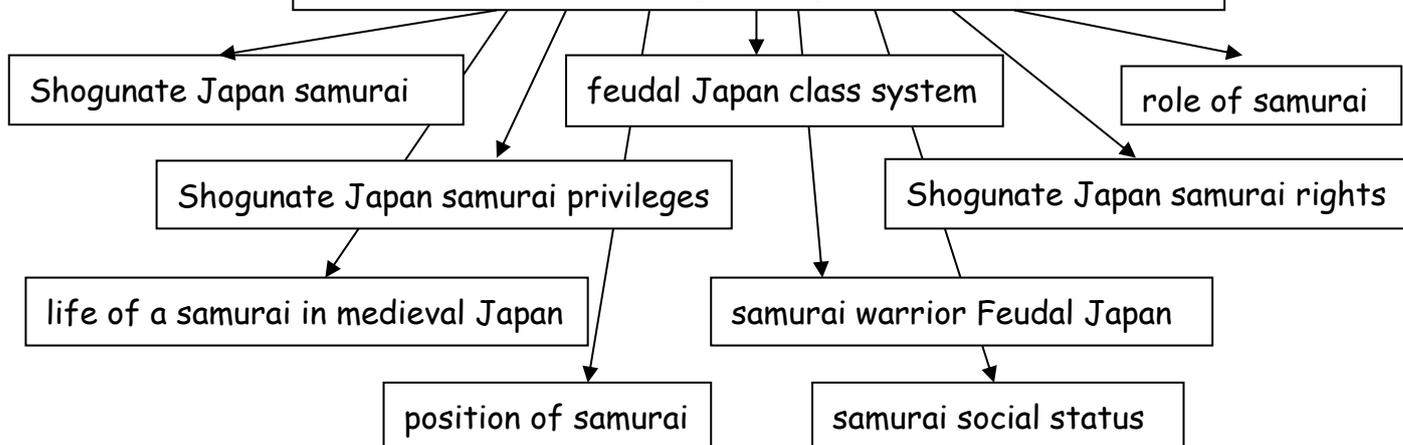
For example: Ask yourself some questions

What was a samurai?
What was their role/job in society?
What was their position in society?
How were they treated?
What privileges/rights did they have?
How did they get these privileges?
Did their privileges change over time? Why?

What are graphic organisers?

These are handy tools to use when developing your assignments. They can be used at the start when you do your brainstorm or when you are planning your writing. Graphic organisers help you plan your work and guide your writing. Here are some Online Graphic Organiser websites for you to look at. You can also print these out and give them to your teacher prior to the writing stage to make sure you are answering the requirements of the assignment.

cooltoolsforschools - Organiser Tools

http://cooltoolsforschools.wikispaces.com/Organiser+Tools

ClassTools.net: Create interactive flash tools/games for education

http://www.classtools.net/

If you prefer to brainstorm on your computer try the Online Brainstorming tool bubbl.us - brainstorm and mind map online

https://bubbl.us/

Or try one of these:

KWL Chart

A KWL Chart gets you thinking and asking questions before you begin to research a topic. The **K** stands for **Know**, **W** stands for **What**, and **L** stands for **Learn**. You don't always need a template; you can rule one up in your subject book.

Know What I already **know** about the topic	What **What** I need to find out	Learn What I have **learned**
	Questions I have …	

Concept Maps

A brainstorm/concept map can be used for most topics and assignments, such as orals, reports and essays. To prompt your thinking, put the main topic word in the centre and use the words **who, what, when, where, why** and **how**. For example:

Who they were

How they organised their society

Where - geographical location

Rulers

Commoners

How they built the pyramids

Extent of the Empire

Slaves

What they did and believed

Ancient Egyptians

When was the Empire at its height?

Daily life

Leisure

Food

Work

Gods

Why were the pyramids built?

Legends
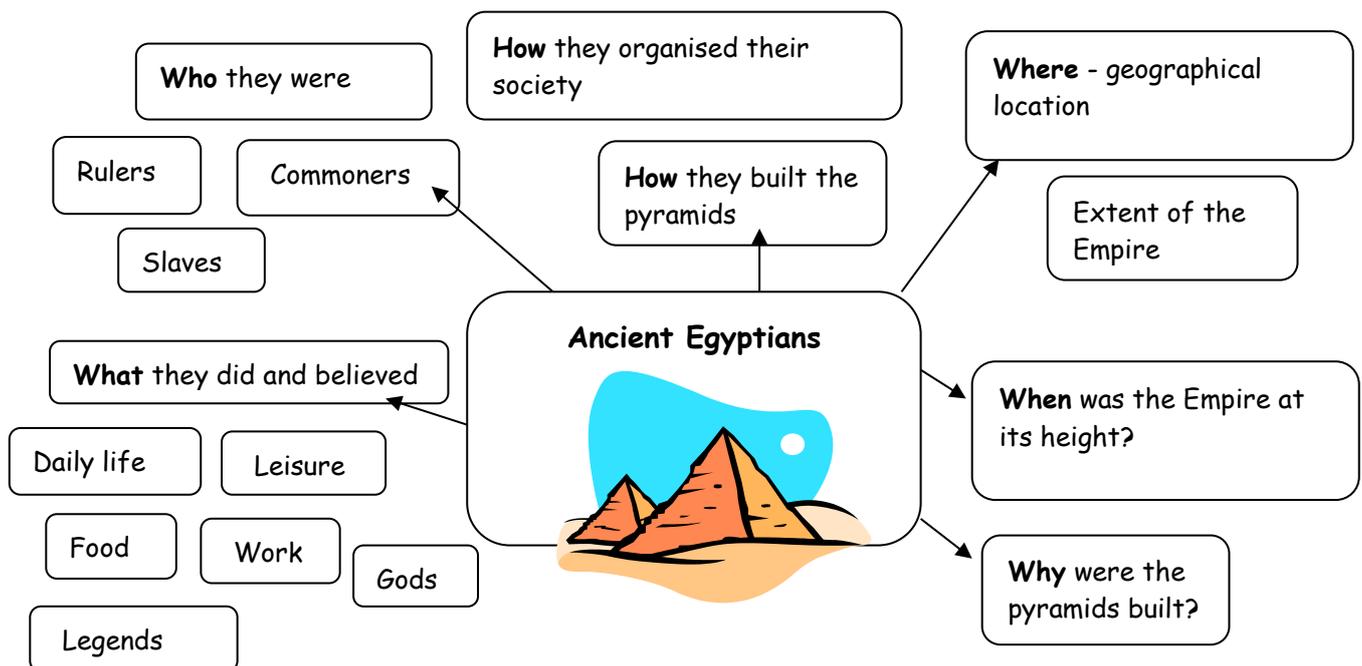
Step 2: How do I locate information?

- Think about the sources that suit your needs.
- Consider sources you already have:
    - Reading material studied in class (e.g. text book articles, library books, encyclopaedias, newspapers, etc).
    - Visual and/or audio text (e.g. YouTube, films, documentaries …).
- Search the library catalogue and the internet for other resources.
- Refine search terms to make your search broader or narrower.
- Evaluate the quality of the information source. Ask the following questions:
    - 'How current is it?'
    - 'How reliable is the author and is it relevant to the task?'

Helpful hints when searching online
- Use a variety of search engines.
- Use *unique* terms that are *specific* to the subject you are researching. For example, instead of searching for "cats," include the breed of the cat.
- Use the Advanced search settings. This will help narrow the number of sites that appear.
- Include the words 'for kids' or 'for students' after you have typed in your key words, phrases or question. You will find these sites easier to read and understand. Keep it simple. Use words that are most likely to appear on websites.
- Use quotation marks to search for specific phrases. This limits the search results to only those webpages that contain the exact phrase you've specified, for example "hunting dogs".
- Use the minus (-) sign before a keyword to tell search providers to exclude pages with that term, for example "dogs-hunting-wild-small".
- Remove common words such as "a," "my," or "the," unless you're looking for a specific title. If the word is part of something you are looking for (a song title, for example), include the common word and surround the phrase with quotation marks.
- Use synonyms or alternative search terms. Be creative or use a thesaurus for ideas. **Site search:** When doing research, it is best to go directly to the source, and site search is a great way to do that. Example: site: www.edu will give educational pages.
- Have multiple tabs open in your browser. You do this by right clicking on a link, then from the pop-up you select 'open in new tab'. This allows you to see many websites and move from one to the other.
- Each time you surf the internet for your research make sure you have a bibliography generator, for example *Cite This for Me* www.citethisforme.com open in a different tab. This site automatically creates your bibliography or reference list using the Harvard Referencing citation system. Make sure you check that all the information has been included. Also check with your teachers as to the correct bibliography format they wish you to use.

Student friendly search engines and websites

Most students use Google, Yahoo, or Bing as their search engines. Below is a list of alternative search engines that are more student friendly and academic in nature.

	Simple English Wikipedia is an excellent site for students. The language and terminology used makes it easier to understand the content. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Simple_English_Wikipedia
	Googawho? Side by side search engine results. One search allows you to compare results from several top engines side by side. www.googawho.com/
	NoodleTools – helps you choose the best search engine for your assignment. http://www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/information/5locate/adviceengine.html
	Sweet Search offers five search engines - Social Studies, Biographies, SweetSites (organised by grade and subject area), School Librarians, and Sweet Search 4 Me. http://www.sweetsearch.com/
	KidRex is a kid-safe search engine powered by Google custom search. http://www.kidrex.org/
	Ask.com is a great place to ask a question. You will get the best answers from the web and real people. http://www.ask.com Yippy.com queries several top search engines, combines the results, and groups similar results together into groups
	Ref Seek is a search engine designed for academic use. It eliminates the advertising and paid links found on Google. www.refseek.com/
	A Research Guide for Students is a good site to learn how to write research reports, including how to reference. It also includes tips literary guides. www.aresearchguide.com/
	Timeline Maker is an easy to use online resource. It also has a large selection of readymade timelines that include history, science, bibliographies. http://www.softschools.com/teacher_resources/timeline_maker/
	Do you need information on current and/or controversial issues? Try either Procon.org http://www.procon.org/ or Debate.org. http://www.debate.org/
	If you have any questions involving numbers and mathematics, Wolfram Alpha or Mathway are the places to go. www.wolframalpha.com/ https://www.mathway.com/
	WorldWideScience.org is a global science entry to 60 national and international scientific databases and portals.
100 Time-Saving Search Engines for Serious Scholars.	100 Search Engines For Academic Research http://www.teachthought.com/technology/100-search-engines-for-academic-research/

Step 3: How do I select my information?

- Preview texts
- Look at the indexes, table of contents and headings
- Skim and scan information to find relevant details
- Look for key words
- Notice bold, italics and underlined words
- Dismiss unnecessary information

Preview

Skim

Selecting information

Scan

Dismiss
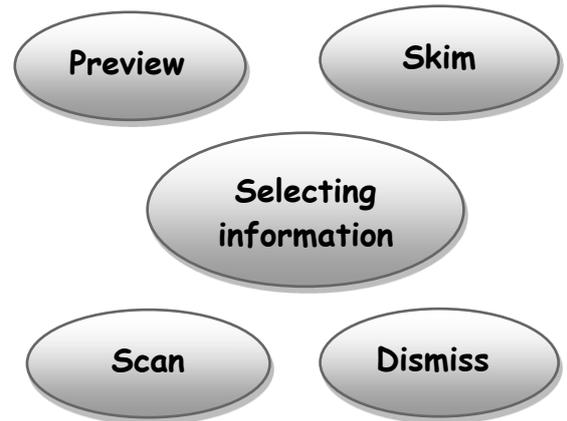
Step 4: How do I record my information?

This stage will depend on your familiarity with the text and its type. You may need to listen to an audio text, and or view a visual text and/or read a written text.

- For a written text you will need to underline key parts and make margin notes.
- For visual, audio or oral texts you will need to take notes.
- Choose the most appropriate graphic organiser.

Graphic Organisers
- T-charts
- Venn diagram
- Cornell Notes
- Sticky notes
- Mind maps

Note taking
- As you read, determine the importance of information
- Record key information

Recording Information

Paraphrasing and Summarising
- Write smaller sections of text in your own words
- Copy and paste quotes, facts, definitions and/or statistics
- Record your sources

Bibliography
- Record your sources
- When on the Internet, have a bibliography generator open e.g. *Cite this for Me*

Paraphrasing and Summarising
- Read over your notes, note cards or dot points
- Retell, sum up, write your main points
- Try to write a topic sentence

Note making

- Make notes using note making strategies and focus questions (see example on page 6).
- Collect relevant quotes to use in your essay, report, explanation, etc.
- Think about the validity of the information – be aware of bias and prejudice.

Bibliography examples

Books
Name of author/s (surname, initial or first name) Year of publication, *Title*, Publisher, Place of publication.

Gaiman, N. 2013, *The ocean at the end of the lane*, Headline, London.
Clarke, S., Hopkins, D. & Walmsley, J. 2012, *The night sky*, Southern Books, Sydney.

No author? Enter the work under the title, followed by the year.
No date? Write n.d.
No publisher? Write n.pub.
No place? Write n.p

Journal and Magazine Articles
Name of author/s Year of publication, ' Title of article', *Magazine name*, volume, issue no. (or date), page no/s.
Zimmer, C. 2014, 'Secrets of the brain', *National Geographic*, February, pp.28-58.
Anderson, K. 2012, 'Whale migration', *Oceanic Studies*, vol.3, no.2, pp.6-8.

Online journal articles from websites
All details as above – then include when you viewed the website and the URL.
Woo, M. 2013, 'Solar power in cool climates', *Design Digest*, March, viewed 2 May 2014, <www.designdigest/file/mar>

Newspaper Articles
Name of author/s Year of publication, 'Title of article', *Newspaper name*, day and month, page no/s.
Hannam, P. 2014, 'Scientists warn of big sea-ice changes', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 January, p. 8.

Online newspaper articles
Ashton, S. 2013, 'Parklands preserved for future', *Northern Times*, 7 June, viewed 10 October 2013, <www.northerntimes.com/parklands10>

Internet
Name of author/s Year of publication, *Title of webpage*, viewed day month year, <URL>
Chester, K. 2013, *Mountain walks of the high country*, viewed 3 March 2014, www.outdoorfest.net.au/walking

Websites with no author – put the title first:

Sea kayaking adventures 2014, viewed 12 April 2014, <www.kayaker.net.au/trips>

Happiness is catching 2012, viewed 6 January 2014, <www.happylife.com/85974>

Wikipedia

Write the title of the Wikipedia page, then scroll to the bottom of the page to find the latest date.

Nelson Mandela 2014, viewed 5 June 2014,
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson_Mandela>

Encyclopedia

'Title of article', *Encyclopedia title* Year of publication, publisher, place of publication, vol. no., page no/s.

'Amazon rainforest', *World Book Encyclopedia* 2012, World Book, Chicago, vol. 1, pp. 401-402.

YouTube Videos

Title of video Year, viewed day month year, <URL>

Climate change: the state of the science 2014, viewed 1 August 2014,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EWOrZQ3L-c>

Online Images

Title of image (or description) Year, name of source/organisation, viewed day month year, <URL>

Humpback whale 2013, World Wildlife Fund, viewed 15 February 2014,
< http://www.worldwildlife.org/species/whale>

Annotating a Bibliography

To annotate a bibliography add a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph to each item in your bibliography. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the items referenced.

Here is an example:

Armstrong, T. 1994, *Multiple intelligences in the classroom,*
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,
Alexandria, VA.

Armstrong describes each of seven intelligences identified
by Howard Gardner. He offers an informal checklist for
identifying personal strengths in the intelligences and
suggests classroom applications. This book is a valuable
tool for teachers at any level, with concrete suggestions
for classroom applications.

Graphic Organisers

These provide a structure for comparing and contrasting information - working out what is similar and what is different. Once you have completed your graphic organiser/s, you should have a better understanding of the topic, which information you can use, and if there are any gaps where you need to find more information, and be in a position to begin drafting your assignment.

T-Chart

Advantages	Disadvantages

Venn Diagram

Differences		Differences
	Similarities	

T-Chart

Comparing and contrasting information

Source 1	Source 2

Symbiosis

definition

A close and permanent relationship between two different species of organisms

Mutualism	**Commensalism**	**Parasitism**
definition	definition	definition
Both organisms benefit	One benefits; the other is neither harmed nor helped	One benefits while the other is harmed
example	example	example
Insects and Flowers	Clownfish and Sea Anemone	Fleas and Dogs

Insect receives nectar from flower	Flowers gets pollinated	Clownfish benefits by being protected	Anemone receives nothing in return	Flea receives food as it sucks blood from the dog	The dog is harmed

Timelines and Life Cycles

These help to:
- organise information into a logical order or sequence while summarising facts, finding patterns, making connections and/or recognising cause and effect.

Cornell Notes

Source: *book, internet, other*	
Author	**Publication date**
Title	
Place of sponsor or publisher	
Date viewed	**URL or Database**

Cornell Notes	
Main ideas, keywords, questions	**Dot point summary of useful information – write as you read**
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....
	....

Summarise your notes - this should be shorter than the notes above, contain specific information, facts and vocabulary.

....

....

....

....

....

....

Steps 4 & 5: How do I organise and present my information?

Step 4 Pre-writing and drafting

- Determine the importance and relevance of the information.
- Look for gaps in the information collected. Check you have enough. Return to 'Locating the information' on page 7 if needed.
- Combine data from different sources - recall and retell to construct meaning, identify trends, interpret data, and draw conclusions.
- Compile a bibliography.

Pre-writing
- Organise your notes and research into groups. These may be linked to your questions.
- Make notes as your read, highlight important information.
- Colour code your notes.
- Make sure you have primary and secondary sources.
- Use maps and graphic organisers to plan your writing.

Drafting
- Ask for or find a template that reflects your writing task.
- Remember to use your own words.
- Start by writing a strong introduction (thesis).
- Write your draft, including the required pictures, quotes, sources, as suggested by the assignment task.

Step 5: Editing and publishing

- Consider the requirements of the task: refer to your assignment sheet, rubric, and the relevant section/s of this handbook. For example: are you writing an essay, a report, an oral presentation, etc.
- Refer to the guidelines and templates given to you by your teacher.
- Keep your audience and purpose in mind.
- Decide on the best method to use and communicate the information.
- Seek feedback and guidance and edit your work.
- Complete the final copy or prepare and present the information.

Editing
- Re-read your assignment looking for missing information, and grammatical and spelling mistakes.
- Ask someone else to edit your assignment.
- Complete a bilbliography and check you have used the correct citation process.
- Submit a draft.

Publishing
- Review draft feedback.
- Create a cover page.
- Include drafts and rubric if required.
- Create your polished copy making sure you have filled the requirements on the assignment.
- Hand in on time.