



Term Paper Guide

Library *How To* Guide

<http://library.nlc.bc.ca>

Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."
Association of College and Research Libraries

For related material, view the **English - Creative Writing** and the **English - Composition** Library Subject Guides.

Ask a Librarian for assistance in finding relevant books and journal articles and/or if you need help researching a course related topic. The librarian will also provide assistance in using the Library's website, online catalogue, article databases, and the Internet. Contact the librarian directly or use the "Ask a librarian" section on the Library web pages.

Dawson Creek Library
Janet Beavers, Coordinator of Library Services
Phone: (250)-782-5251 (local 1251)
Email: jbeavers@nlc.bc.ca

Fort St. John Library
Dawna Turcotte, Librarian
Phone: (250)-785-6981 (local 2012)
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1. Getting Started

Requirements: Before starting your assignment, review all requirements outlined by your instructor.

Appropriateness of Topic: Make sure your topic fits the course assignment and standards.

Information Needs & Availability: Give yourself a lot of time for research. You may borrow items and obtain articles from other libraries if the material is not owned by the NLC library system.

- Use the **Interlibrary Loans Service** to order books from other library systems. Be aware that may take up to three weeks for a book to arrive from another library.
- Use the **Intercampus Loans Service** to borrow books from other NLC libraries. Depending on where the book is in the NLC Library system, it may take a few days to a week for an item to arrive at your campus.
- If you **request an article**, it will generally arrive between 1 – 3 days.

Personal Interest: Take time to identify a topic that is of personal interest to you and that challenges you.

2. Selecting a Topic: Limiters

Limiters make a broad or general topic more specific, i.e., these terms limit or restrict your search to find only those results containing these terms in your search statement. They may include time, place, person or group of people and event or aspect.

<i>Broad Topic Example:</i>	Canadian History
<i>Limiters: Time:</i>	eighteen-century
<i>Place:</i> Atlantic	Canada
<i>Person or Group:</i>	female slaves
<i>Event or Aspect:</i>	resettlement in Nova Scotia

3. Developing an Argument

After you have identified a broad subject and relevant limiters, you may be able to compose a sentence that incorporates these ideas into a more specific topic such as, *The resettlement of female slaves in Nova Scotia during the eighteen-century*, from the above example. Developing such statements will help you further focus your topic, and you will begin to have a clearer idea of a possible thesis statement. You should also ask yourself what aspects of this topic you have not considered. Make a list of the information and sources you are aware of and a list of questions that require additional research.

4. Keyword and Subject Headings

A keyword is a word or term that best describes the information you are looking for. When identifying all the possible aspects of your topic, locate keywords, phrases, synonyms and subject headings associated with the topic. You can use resources such as a thesaurus or subject guide to identify additional terms.

Keyword Searching

A keyword search usually searches all fields of a document using natural or common language. This allows all variations of a word to be searched using truncation or wildcards. You use keyword searching when the controlled vocabulary (established list of preferred terms) is unknown, no subject heading exists for your topic, or there are several concepts that describe your topic.

Subject Searching

A subject search generally searches only specified fields within a document. The *Library of Congress Subject Headings* is an example of a controlled vocabulary. You use subject searching when a subject heading exists or specialist vocabulary is required. Subject searching is often used after a keyword search turns up too many results and is used as a limiter. You can browse subject headings in Webcat, the library's online catalogue, and in the online library databases or indexes.

5. Notes & Summaries

Taking organized notes and documenting each resource will save valuable time. Check all bibliographic information at the beginning of your notes. When taking notes, indicate the page number corresponding with each note, and place quotation marks around exact quotes.

Paraphrase or summarize the information reviewed. Ideas and direct quotes need to be properly documented. Once you have formed your ideas and opinions, you can more easily outline your paper. Group similar ideas together and identify relationships between ideas. This will help to develop a logical progression for your argument. Remember to read with a purpose; read for the main points or arguments and define technical terminology.

6. Preliminary Library Search: Primary Sources

A primary source is a first-hand account; original research, study or experimentation, or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation. A primary source is written or created during the time period studied. Specific types of primary sources may include original documents such as diaries or letters, journals, interviews, government documents, public records, and eyewitness accounts. Primary sources also include: creative works such as novels or films, sheet music, film footage, and relics or artifacts such as jewelry or pottery.

7. Library Research: Secondary & Tertiary Sources

Once you have completed preliminary research, you can begin locating secondary and tertiary sources of information.

Secondary sources interpret, analyze and evaluate primary sources. They are usually written by someone who does not have first-hand knowledge of the subject, tend to be argumentative and often provide an accompanying bibliography. There are several types of secondary sources, including textbooks, scholarly articles, law and legislation and government policy. Often secondary sources indicate whether they are based on other original sources.

Tertiary sources compile, analyze and digest secondary sources. Tertiary sources tend to act as tools to locate secondary and primary sources. They tend to be factual reference books used for framing and cross-referencing. There are several types of tertiary sources including a chapter in a textbook, an entry in an encyclopedia, indexes, bibliographies, guidebooks and registers. Tertiary sources are often referred to in library settings as *Reference Material*.

The library's Webcat (Library catalogue of materials), library databases and indexes and the Internet are all useful resources for locating secondary and tertiary sources.

Webcat

Search Webcat using your list of subject headings, keywords, phrases and synonyms. Sometimes a book on the same or similar topic will have a similar call number, so browse the library shelves. Refer to bibliographies at the back of your resources for additional titles of interest.

Databases and Indexes

Locate journal articles on your topic by using the Library databases and indexes. Use keywords and subject headings to search the relevant electronic resources. When you locate an article that appears to be on topic, check the subject headings or descriptors in the article's citation page and repeat your search using the suggested subject headings. Remember to write down the complete reference for a journal article, as this information will be required in your bibliography. Many of the databases and indexes now provide you with the reference citation in the format you prefer, such as APA, MLA, etc, available for printing, cut-and-paste, and email.

The Internet

Education institutions, government agencies, corporations and special interest groups are an alternate source for information via the Web. Check with your instructor and/or Librarian, and use the Library's *How to Evaluate Web Resources* in the *How To* section of the Library Web Pages, before incorporating Internet information into your paper.

Other Libraries: Outlook Online

Outlook is an online resource that allows libraries to directly access the virtual catalogue of other member libraries including all college, university and public libraries within British Columbia. Refer to the *Library's Outlook How to Guide* for additional information. Books and articles may be brought in from these institutions for your use.

8. Bibliography Checklist

It is easy to misquote sources. To keep organized, fully document all the information on each source cited. Be sure to check with your instructor for the documentation style requirements. The library has the latest editions of documentation/citation manuals.

9. Evaluating Sources

Once you have located a possible resource, it is important to identify the author and publisher's reliability. Sources reflect the author's biases and may not be accurate or well reasoned. When evaluating primary, secondary or tertiary sources, consider the following issues:

- the social, political or economical environment in which the document was composed
- the writer's source of information, motivation and biases
- contradictions from other sources and their credibility
- the timeliness of the information
- distinguish between popular and academic sources, as most scholarly work requires the latter

Check with the Library's *How to Evaluate Web Resources* before incorporating information into your paper, as many of the same rules apply to printed materials.

10. Outline

After you have completed your initial library research and have formulated a thesis sentence, you can begin to arrange this information into a logical outline. Outlines differ greatly depending on the preferences of the writer. You may develop a list of topics and subtopics, or you may prepare a formal outline that identifies topics and subtopics and the arguments and relationships that exists between the ideas. Whatever your preference, an outline is the initial attempt to shape information into a logical cohesive essay. Outlines also help to identify information gaps in your argument and identify unnecessary information that can be omitted.

11. First Draft

Using your notes and outline, you can begin to develop each topic and subtopic into well-constructed paragraphs. Remember that this is only the first draft of your essay. Writers often have difficulty during this process. The key is to refer to your notes and keep your thesis statement in mind. This will help you focus your arguments.

There are many academic writing guides available that give detailed instruction on the writing process. The following are among the resources available at your NLC library:

Writing a great research paper – ten part DVD series (2007)

Writing for social scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book, or article (2007)

Strategies for successful writing: a rhetoric, research guide, reader, and handbook (2007)

Designs for Disciplines: An Introduction to Academic Writing, edited by Steven Roe and Pamela den Ouden (2003)

12. Additional Library Research

After you have outlined your major points and arguments, you may find that there are some gaps in your information. If important factual information is missing, the flow or logic of your essay may be affected. Review your notes and any other documentation. Refer to the library's reference books, such as encyclopedias, almanacs or yearbooks to locate additional supporting information.

13. Second Draft

Following your first draft and additional library research, you will need to revise and edit your essay. For editing and proofreading use a grammar and spellcheck, but do not rely completely on the computer to locate your errors. During the revision process, substantial changes are expected. It is important that you read your essay in its entirety so that your arguments are clear and precise. Having a peer proofread your essay or attend a writing workshop is also beneficial.

Before submitting your assignment, it is essential you carefully review the essay in its entirety for grammatical correctness. The following are among the resources available at your NLC library:

Checkmate: a writing reference for Canadians (2008)

Student guide to writing essays (2007)

The following are online writing guides focusing on grammar and punctuation:

Capital Community College: <http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/>

- Capital College Guide to Grammar and Writing: <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>

The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing: Michael Harvey: <http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/>

OWL Online Writing Lab. Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

- Strategies for Improving Sentence Clarity: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_sentclar.html
- Coherence: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_cohere.html

University College London: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/>

- Internet Language of Grammar: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/home.htm>

University of Chicago: <http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/>

- Writing in College – A Short Guide to College Writing: <http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/>

University of Toronto: <http://www.utoronto.ca/>

- University College Writing Workshop – Writing Handouts: <http://www.utoronto.ca/ucwriting/handouts.html>

Wheaton College: <http://www.wheaton.edu/>

- Writing Resources Clarity: <http://www.wheaton.edu/learnres/writectr/Resources/clarity.htm>

14. Documentation

As the World Wide Web (WWW) changes daily and sources you locate and cite in a research paper can move or be removed from the Internet, it is a good practice to print out the web pages you have used as references. Saving notes and rough draft(s) until after the assignment has been marked can support you if there is any speculation of plagiarism.

15. Style Manuals

Always refer to your instructor for guidance on the proper style of documentation required for each assignment. The library holds a variety of style manuals in the reference section.

The following are online style manuals:

APA: Official Site: <http://www.apa.org>

- APAStyle.org – Style Tips: <http://www.apastyle.org/>

APA Research Style Crib Sheet: <http://www.docstyles.com/archive/apacrib.pdf>

APA: <http://www.nutsandboltsguide.com/apa.html#references>

Chicago Manual Style: <http://www.nutsandboltsguide.com/>

Chicago Manual of Style Online: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

- Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Concordia University:

- APA Citation Style: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/apa.php>

- MLA Citation Style: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/mla.html>

OWL Online Writing Lab. Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

- APA Formatting and Style Guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
- MLA Formatting and Style Guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>
- University of British Columbia Lib: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/>
- Getting Started with MLA Style: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/home/about/instruct/mlastyle.html>
- Getting Started with MLA Style: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/home/about/instruct/apastyle.html>
- Writing Center- University of Wisconsin: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/>
- Chicago/Turabian Documentation: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html>

16. Internet Resources

The following are additional Internet resources that may help you in the writing process:

Claremont graduate University: <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/1.asp>

- Tips for Writing a Precis: <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/905.asp>

Cleveland State University: <http://www.csuohio.edu/>

- The Writing Center: <http://www.csuohio.edu/writingcenter/invent.html>

Guide to Writing a Basic Essay: <http://members.tripod.com/%7Eklivingston/essay/index.html>

LEO – Literacy Education Online : <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/>

- Comparison/Contrast Essays: <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/comparcontrast.html>
- Writing a Process Essay: <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/process.html>
- Writing a Reaction or Response Essay: <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/reaction.html>
- The Definition Essay: <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/definition.html>

OWL Online Writing Lab. Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

- Writing a Research Paper: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/index.html>

RSCC Writing Lab – Roane State College: <http://www.rsccln.us/owl&writingcenter/OWL/Argument.html>

- A Brief Guide to Writing Argumentative Essays: <http://www.rsccln.us/owl&writingcenter/OWL/Argument.html>

University of Victoria: <http://web.uvic.ca/>

The UVic Writer's Guide: <http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/EssaysToc.html>

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