**YORK**COLLEGE**CUNY**

**THE *DRAFT MY PAPER* COMPANION**

**Writing Across the Curriculum**

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Introduction

Welcome to the *Draft My Paper Companion*, a set of resources that the York College WAC program has developed to help instructors integrate *Draft My Paper* effectively into their classes. We hope this volume will help you use *Draft My Paper* to initiate your students into the research process, and to help them navigate that process throughout the semester. We’ve targeted several moments of the research and writing process here, including narrowing down search terms from a general topic, using the library catalog for that initial search for books, and using reference databases to look for articles online. Wherever they fit in with the film, all of these materials are specifically designed to help you use *Draft My Paper* in a way that suits your own class’s needs.

The resources here supplement, extend and enhance the work that *Draft My Paper* starts. We’ve tried to fill in some of the details that are missing in the film, and to elaborate upon some of the topics that it addresses directly, but briefly. Some of them will make sense after a single viewing, and some will work better after you replay a single chapter and focus a unit of work on that element of the film.

We’ve also included information to help you use the resources which are available to all instructors in York’s library.

This volume was initially compiled by Ann Marie Tonyan, and has been subsequently edited by Heather Robinson, Michael J. Cripps and the 2007-2008 York College CUNY Writing Fellows.

Identifying Effective Search Terms

OBJECTIVE

In *Draft My Paper*, Marcus receives precious advice on how to locate reliable information sources through the library catalog, online databases etc. However, the video does not stress the importance of clarifying one’s research topic before delving into resource materials; nor does it explain how to find effective search terms. This often-neglected phase of the research process can have a great impact on a student’s ability to obtain information through online catalogs and databases.

This section offers examples of assignments and questions that will help students reconsider the importance of search terms in order to make their research investigations more fruitful.

IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE SEARCH TERMS:

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

Turning A Topic Into A Meaningful Search

After you’ve found a topic, how do you begin to locate and identify resources that will expand your knowledge on the topic enough to write a paper? When it comes to research, practice makes perfect. Don’t expect your first attempt to isolate the most relevant exact resources you’ll need and use. With that in mind, begin to identify your knowledge of the topic.

Are you familiar with this topic? Are you very familiar, somewhat familiar, or not familiar at all? If you’re not familiar at all, then first start by looking up the definitions of words you don’t understand. Take your time and be thorough so you will be better able to identify appropriate search terms. Be aware of any contextual meanings. For example “articulate” means very different things in the world of communication, the world of surgery and the world of partnerships.

Once you’re comfortable with the topic, think of the knowledge you already have. Jot down your conceptions and ideas. Use these as search terms. The more exact your search terms, the narrower the search will be and the fewer results you will get.

Now try this exercise based on a topic you have no familiarity with. You can find a few examples at the end of this worksheet.

Do you need to do some research to fully grasp the scope of this new topic?

If there is any confusion about the topic or the scope or if there is uncertainty over the definition of one or more words, then do some basic research to clear up confusion or pre-conceived ideas. Be sure you understand the sources you’re allowed to cite and those you are not.

Look Up: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Use one of the sources you’ve found; choose a passage. This passage is about:

Then try to free-associate words with this topic. These words can be used to expand or restrict your search:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Identify nouns or noun phrases in the passage you chose earlier. Try to get as specific as possible. Try a broad search first. This will give you more results than a narrow search but it can confirm you’re on the right track. For example, volcano activity is a broader search term and will have more results than volcano activity in Hawaii.

Nouns: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phrases:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Example Topics:**

Crop production in Ireland during the famine:

It is often presented that the famine in Ireland was caused by a shortage of food. Other contradictory positions indicate other sources for the famine based upon export levels from Ireland during the famine years. Discover and discuss the facts concerning levels of crop production in Ireland during the famine years.

Define the Ring of Fire (Hint: Not music related).

Discuss the function(s) of bioluminescence across the Domains.

Aposomatic coloring has many costs and benefits and also involves mimicry in nature. In the same manner address bioluminescence in nature providing specific examples from multiple domains as well as the costs, benefits and efficiency of each example. Images may be taken from the web with full credit but all sources should be from the primary literature of peer-reviewed journals.

Discuss the Tax rate on Extraordinary Income in the U.S.

Use the following as keywords and see how the results differ. Does one get more? Is one more relevant?

1. “tax rate on extraordinary income”

2. “ “extraordinary income” “ ( in quotes)

As an example I got 2,030,00 results for keywords 1 and only 300,000 for keywords 2, but the results for keywords 2 were more relevant.

Using Databases

OBJECTIVE

In the video, the protagonists launch a search through the renowned research database *JSTOR*, thereby showing students a concrete application of this research tool. The segment explains how to use research databases to find full-text journal articles. It explains why these resources are often more reliable than others and how they can strengthen a student’s research paper.

Owing partly to the transdisciplinary scope of *Draft My Paper*, little information is provided about how to determine what databases might be more applicable to one specific discipline: a gap that faculty members can fill in, whether by themselves or with the assistance of librarians and/or WAC staff members.

USING DATABASES:

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Plan a library session dedicated to research methodology:

This can be useful to introduce discipline-specific online databases to your students. After consulting with a librarian, you can introduce a few discipline-specific databases and model the search process using concrete examples.

Students are more likely to remember how to use databases if they have a chance to try and use them. After you’ve introduced a database, give students time to use different search terms and go through their research results. You can assist them in their investigations by walking through the classroom/computer lab.

*Note*: Make sure your students already have an idea for their research topic. For instance, you can require them to email you their topic a week before the library session (This could be assignment #1 of their research project). This will not only provide you examples of research topics that you can use for your presentation, but will also help students directly relate to your research session.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

*Annotated bibliography:*

To begin working on your annotated bibliography, you will find at least 2 journal articles and one magazine/newspaper article. For each entry, you will reference the database and the search terms that helped you find the article. As explained in the instructions on the annotated bibliography (see syllabus), you will summarize the topic of the journal article / research source (2 to 3 sentences), and explain why this could be useful for your research project (2 to 3 sentences).

For the journal article entries, you can use one of the following databases: *EBSCO*, *JSTOR*, and *Project Muse*, *Humanities Full Text*, *CQ Researcher* and *SAGE Journals* (other databases can be used if you think they are more in tune with your research topic).

For the magazine/newspaper article entry, LexisNexis is recommended. Solid news sources to consider include but are not limited to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *The Economist, Time Magazine, Newsweek and BusinessWeek*.

Using CUNY+ and Library Catalogs

[www.york.cuny.edu/library](http://www.york.cuny.edu/library)

OBJECTIVE

In the video, Marcus uses CUNY+ to locate research sources. The sequence provides basic tips about online searches but leaves out useful information about the technical possibilities of online catalogs.

This section suggests options to broaden the students’ knowledge of the CUNY+ catalog and provides practice in listing sources in a specific style. The following assignment can be modified to fit any discipline.

USING CUNY+: ASSIGNMENT

Sources included should be in complete bibliographic style using the APA or MLA guidelines in *The Bedford Handbook*. Feel free to use the help menu on the website.

1. Provide one source of information on Schubert songs found only at York College. Provide another five book sources found in other CUNY colleges. Please include the library call numbers.
2. Using a “Boolean Search,” find three sources on opera criticism written within the last three years. What are the Boolean operators?
3. Using the “Guided Search,” list two sources found if “Beethoven” is entered in the search field when “subject” and “title” are the selected search type.
4. Using “Command Search,” find a musical score of Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*. What is the command language to search music? How else could I limit my search to musical scores?
5. Where can I find a printed version of the journal *Music Analysis* published in the last ten years?
6. How many sources does this professor have on reserve this semester?

Using WorldCat

[www.york.cuny.edu/library/library-links](http://www.york.cuny.edu/library/library-links)

OBJECTIVE

After students identify potentially useful print resources, they often struggle with locating the materials. This exercise is meant to give students practice locating materials in other libraries and finding out how they may be able to access the information.

ASSIGNMENT

Once you’ve finished your early draft, trade works cited lists with a classmate. Find one of the books on your partner’s works cited list using the WorldCat database. Where is the nearest library that has your book? Is it checked out or available? Do you have access to this library? How did you access WorldCat? (Tips: you can find the database on the York College Library website, as well as via books.google.com).

Evaluating Sources

OBJECTIVE

Redirecting students’ attention from amateur Google searches to academic research is a defining theme of *Draft My Paper.* In the video, Marcus and his research consultants search through the library catalog and online databases to find solid academic resources that will improve the quality of his paper.

One important step that *Draft My Paper* doesn’t show is Marcus evaluating his sources to see which were most suitable for his project. This step is too often neglected by students, who are likely to think that anything found through “legitimate” means is appropriate for their work. The following exercises and assignments help students learn to identify key criteria in choosing and evaluating sources.

EVALUATING SOURCES: IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

There are multiple elements to take into consideration when evaluating sources: Authority, Recency, Accuracy, Scope, and Objectivity (you may use different terms; these are suggestive). After you’ve briefly outlined the qualities that students should consider when evaluating sources, the following exercises can be used to develop your students’ skills, relative to their topic and relative to other available sources.

Exercises for Understanding Evaluative Criteria

1. In class, have students break into small groups to discuss and rank these elements in order of importance, including a brief statement of why they chose that order. Have them share these rankings in the class, noting the differences between/among groups and asking students to justify their choices to the class.
2. For homework, give students a list of 3-5 specific sources that you have vetted, and a corresponding topic. Have them check these sources out (online/in the library/etc.), and write an annotated bibliography for them, specifically focusing on which sources are the most appropriate for the topic. Ask them to consider Authority, Recency, Accuracy, Scope, and Objectivity.

Exercises for Understanding Scope

1. In class, have your students do a low-stakes exercises (either in groups or separately) about when it is appropriate to use general or broad sources, and when to use more specific sources. You can have them write a few paragraphs on the matter, or present them with some scenarios specific to your discipline and ask them to explain in writing which is more useful, and why.
2. For homework, ask your students to critique the scope of a book or article they are considering for their research. Remind them to use abstracts, tables of contents, blurbs, book reviews, etc. in this process, and have them turn in a one-page review noting the scope of the book, its intended readership, and whether or not it will work for his/her project.

Exercises for Understanding Bias

1. After spending a little more time discussing how to read for bias, present your students with an article (or two articles) of your choosing and have them break into pairs or small groups to assess or compare the article/s, following the steps in your mini-lecture.
2. For homework, ask students to find two pre-vetted sources (articles, books, etc.) on a single subject to seek out and review. Ask them to compare the two in terms of bias. Have them write a paragraph summarizing the bias or objectivity of each article, and noting X number of specific clues that helped him/her recognize the tone as biased or objective.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SOURCES

When you’re evaluating sources, ask yourself the following questions about each item you think might be useful in your research.

Authority

* Who is the author, and what are his/her qualifications?
* If no author is listed, who sponsors the ideas being presented?
* Does the article refer to outside sources? If so, how trustworthy are they?

Recency

* How timely is the information being presented?
* How quickly does information change in this field of research?

Coverage

* Does the resource cover the right time period for your work?
* Who is the resource directed at: a person new to your topic, a general reader, or a specialist in the field? Are you the intended audience?
* Does the resource offer references to other sources you might find useful?

Accuracy

* How does the information presented in the current source compare to what you already know on the subject? Does it support or challenge other sources on the subject?
* Are there any obvious errors in statistics, in typography, etc.?

Objectivity

* Does the resource offer facts, opinion, or a mix of the two?
* Is the author/publisher affiliated with any special interest group (religious, social, political, etc.) that might promote one side of an issue?
* Are alternative views addressed? How fairly are these views treated?
* Does the author’s language show signs of bias? Is it emotional or contain loaded words?

EVALUATING SOURCES: WORKSHEET

This worksheet will direct you to two different websites that, on the surface, appear to both focus on the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Go to [www.thekingcenter.org](http://www.thekingcenter.org) and spend a few minutes browsing the site and its links before answering the same questions:

1. Who is the author or sponsor of this site?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How do you know? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Does the site provide dates for its material? If so, how current is it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Who is this site directed at? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How do you know? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Does this site offer links to outside sources? If so, what does it link to?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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5. How does the information presented at this site compare to what you already know about Dr. King? Does it support or challenge other sources on the subject?

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6. Does this website offer facts, opinion, or a mix of the two? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Is the author/publisher affiliated with any special interest group (religious, social, political, etc.)? If so, what is it?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Does the author’s language show signs of bias? If so, give an example.

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Now visit [www.martinlutherking.org](http://www.martinlutherking.org) and spend a few minutes browsing the site and its links before answering the following questions:

9. Who is the author or sponsor of this site? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How do you know? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. Does the site provide dates for its material? If so, how current is it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

11. Who is this site directed at? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How do you know? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

12. Does this site offer links to outside sources? If so, what does it link to? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

13. How does the information presented at this site compare to what you already know about Dr. King? Does it support or challenge other sources on the subject? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

14. Does this website offer facts, opinion, or a mix of the two? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Is the author/publisher affiliated with any special interest group (religious, social, political, etc.)? If so, what is it?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

16. Does the author’s language show signs of bias? If so, give an example. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

17. Having assessed both of these sites, which one would do you think is a better source on the life and work of Dr. King. Why?

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1. Which of the two websites seems to be more biased? Can you think of a time when using a biased source would be a *good* idea?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluating Internet Resources

OBJECTIVE

*Draft My Paper* seeks to educate students about the wealth of library resources that can serve their research purposes. As mentioned earlier, it also aims to take the students beyond basic search engines toward more specialized and credible academic sources. One implicit assumption is that the Internet is filled with information from all kinds of sources, but the quality and reliability of that information varies greatly from one site to another.

Nevertheless, there is a lot of information on the Internet that students use in their research and writing assignments—some of it available from no other source. As a complement to the information provided in *Draft My Paper,* it may be useful to help students evaluate Internet resources and clarify the extent to which Internet resources can make valuable contributions to a research assignment. This section offers handouts and sample assignments to help faculty members and students evaluate Internet resources.

EVALUATING INTERNET RESOURCES:

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The key to using internet resources is learning to evaluate websites and to use only credible information from authoritative sources.

**CREDIBLE**: Literally, it means “believable”. A source you can trust. A source you can rely on for accurate, up-to-date, useful information.

**AUTHORITATIVE**: Knowledgeable, expert, a recognized authority on the subject.

How do I know if an Internet source is credible and authoritative?

The best information on the Internet usually comes from academic institutions, government agencies, advocacy organizations, professional organizations, or major media outlets. You can often tell if a website falls into one of these categories based on the 3-letter domain extensions that appear at the end of most website addresses (URLs).

|  |
| --- |
| The most common domain name extensions and what they mean |
| .com | A commercial organization, which may be credible and authoritative, but may also be trying to sell you a product or service or advance a narrow personal agenda |
| .org | Intended for use by non-profit and non-governmental organizations, including advocacy organizations and professional groups. These sources are often credible and authoritative, but in fact, anybody can purchase the rights to a .org domain. |
| .edu | Used by academic institutions such as colleges and universities. These are generally credible and authoritative sources. |
| .gov | Used by government agencies, which are often credible and reliable sources. This extension is also used by elected officials (including the White House and members of Congress), so in some cases you should be on guard for partisan bias. |

EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES:

 HOME ASSIGNMENT

Finding Credible And Authoritative Information On The Internet.

This assignment gives you an opportunity to practice the skills of finding, using, and citing information on the Internet.

1. Choose a topic that interests you and that you might consider suitable for an academic research paper, such as global warming, abortion rights, or renewable energy.
2. Using Google or a similar search engine, run an Internet search on the term you chose.
3. From the search returns, find one of each of the following kinds of websites:
	1. academic institution
	2. government agency
	3. advocacy organization
	4. professional organization
	5. media outlet
4. From each of these five sources, find one statement of fact or one provocative opinion (the sort of fact or opinion that you might cite in a research paper).
5. For each of your five statements of fact or opinion, write a suitable citation of the source based on a style guide such as MLA, APA, or Chicago.

Example

A Google search on the term “global warming” returned about 91,100,000 listings, including the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [**US EPA - Global Warming Site**](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/)

|  |
| --- |
| The EPA Climate Change site provides comprehensive information on the issue of climate change and **global warming** in a way that is accessible and meaningful **...**www.epa.gov/climatechange/ - 16k - [Cached](http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:pAkUrkd1XnoJ:www.epa.gov/climatechange/+global+warming&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=us&client=firefox-a) – [Similar pages](http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&hs=j3c&q=related:www.epa.gov/climatechange/) - [Note this](http://www.google.com/search?q=global+warming&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a) |

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This is an example of a website published by a government agency (how do we know?).

Statement of fact:

“Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere are often called greenhouse gases.”

Citation:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2007, October). *Greenhouse gas emissions*. Retrieved

 from http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/index.html#ggo.

How to Summarize Your Source Material

OBJECTIVE

Once students have found some potentially useful sources, the next step for them is to figure out what they’re about. Writing a summary of a source is a good way to take notes that will be useful later on, when the student wants to revisit the text. The following exercises describe strategies that can help students write effective summaries.

NOTE: These exercises assume that the students have evaluated their sources and made certain they are appropriate for an academic paper.

HOW TO READ YOUR SOURCE MATERIAL

Books

* Read the introduction to determine the scope of the text to make sure this is a source of interest
* Review the table of contents for relevant chapters and section headings appropriate to your research topic if you determine it is not necessary to read the entire book
* Read any chapter and/or section you deem useful to your subject of study
* If the book is helpful, it may be important to read the conclusion as well

Scholarly articles

* Read the abstract of the article to determine the scope of the text to make sure this is a source of interest
* Scan the article for relevant sections per section headings if you determine it is not necessary to read the entire article (which is rare)
* Read the article or specific sections of the article you deem useful to your subject of study

Newspaper and magazine articles

* Read the first paragraph (or two) of the article to determine the scope of the text to make sure this is a source of interest
* Scan the article for relevant material to determine if it is necessary to read the entire article
* Read the article if you deem it useful to your subject of study

Websites

* Read the summary text of the main page or about page, or the first few paragraphs of the page if it is about your research topic
* Look at the menu, links, and relevant citations for more information; scan the entire site for relevant material to determine what parts of the web site are a propos to your work
* Read the relevant sections you deem it useful to your subject of study

Primary sources

* Read the first few paragraphs of the primary source to determine the scope of the text to make sure this is a source of interest
* Scan the source for other relevant material to determine if it is necessary to read the entire article
* Read the material if you deem it useful to your subject of study

  HOW TO NOTATE YOUR SOURCE MATERIAL WHILE READING

* What is the source about? What is the scope of the book (such as place, time, people, topic, etc.)?
* What is main argument of your source? What are other key points you find relevant? What are the key headings?
* What is the intended audience of your source?
* What is the discipline of the author (historian, anthropologist, musicologist, activist, teacher) who created the source?
* What kind of data/information does the source use to make its argument?
* How is this source relevant to your research paper?
* Is there any other bias that should be considered in your annotation?

HOW TO SUMMARIZE YOUR CITATIONS

The aim of the annotated bibliography is to briefly summarize each of your sources. You will need to describe what the source is about and how it is relevant to your research paper. Below is a general rubric for how to order your annotation.

* Briefly summarize keys ideas from the source.
* Describe how the key ideas and/or information can help you answer your chosen research question.
* Be specific. Do not write, for example, “this source provides useful information” without explaining what useful information the source provides and how it connects to your research focus.

Annotations should be a paragraph long—somewhere between five and eight sentences. As in summaries, you should not use quotations.