

# ENGL 150: English Composition

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**Getting Started with Your Research**

## Do you find sorting and evaluating information overwhelming?

**This guide will help you:**

- Save time!
- Find trustworthy information
- Find relevant information
- Find information that is appropriate for academic research

### What's your topic?

- Write it down to help define what it is you are looking for
- Identify two or three relevant keywords
- Think of alternate terms or even alternate spellings
- Use a general or specialized encyclopedia, dictionary or textbook to get basic background information.

### Too few results?

- Make your search more general e.g. Canada instead of British Columbia
- Use fewer terms
- Include synonyms
- Use keywords instead of subject headings

### Too many results?

- Try a narrower term e.g. Vancouver Island or Victoria instead of British Columbia
- Add more keywords
- Limit your terms to a specific search field (e.g. title or abstract)
- Limit to specific document types
- Limit to scholarly articles

### Further ways to refine your search

- TIME – Since 2009? In the last 6 months?
- PLACE - Canada, BC, Local, International?
- POPULATION – By gender, age, occupation, ethnicity, etc.?
- VIEWPOINT – Social, medical, economic, political or legal?
- Do you need [STATISTICAL DATA](#) to support your research?

### Choosing resources - The library is the BEST starting point!

#### Finding Books

- Search the Library [catalogue](#) to find books, e-books, or DVDs on your topic.
- When you do find a book that is on your topic, look at the Subject Headings in the catalogue record and use those terms to do another search to find all the similar books

#### Finding Articles

- Use one of the Library's general or specialized [databases](#) to find articles in magazines or journals (can be available in print or online).
- And remember, when you find a good article, look at the full record and see what Subject terms have been used to describe the article.
- Are you looking for scholarly or popular sources? [What's the difference?](#)

### Searching the internet - Before using a web resource ask yourself:

- Is this a credible site?
- Who produced it and what are their qualifications?
- What values are presented?
- Is it fact or opinion?
- Why was the site created?

### Need some help choosing a topic?




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- [Best Information on the Net](#)  
The librarians at St. Ambrose University have put together a directory of excellent websites for college papers. Especially good is the "Hot Paper Topics" section.

[Comments \(0\)](#)

### Current Issues Websites

Here are some credible websites that collect articles and webpages that deal with hotly debated issues:

- [FactCheck.org](#)  
FactCheck.org is a non-profit website that checks claims made by political figures (on both sides of the aisle) for inaccuracies.
- [ProCon.org](#)  
ProCon.Org is a non-profit website that gathers information on topics in a pro/con format. Resources provided promote critical thinking and are non-biased.

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## Always an option - Ask a librarian for help

- In person (check our [hours](#)), by [email](#), or by [AskAway](#)

## Give yourself enough time

- Research takes time so make sure you give yourself time to read and evaluate what you find
- You may want to re-think your question once you've done some preliminary reading
- Allow time to get help or get material from other libraries

## Taking notes

- Paraphrase, summarize or quote from your sources
- Avoid plagiarism – document, document, document!
- Keep track of all the resources you used

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