

VASC Research

Resources for College Research Papers

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This index covers three particular areas of college research: Academic research (the writing of research papers) internet research, and documenting sources to avoid plagiarism. In the section on the internet we also include sites that train you how to use the internet and search engines effectively and how to evaluate what you find.

VASC Reference Desk

- [On-line Reference](#)
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- [Guide to Internet Directories](#)
- [Free On-line Literature](#)
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"Just the facts!" The sites listed here provide reference materials from on-line dictionaries, encyclopedias, and almanacs to the best in Web resources for factual data. We also provide a guides to search engines, internet directories, and sources for free e-texts and literature, as well as free typing programs.

Academic Research

From brain-storming and refining research topics, to the research process, to planning your paper, to creating a Works Cited page, the sites below give you effective advice and plans.

[A+ Research & Writing, Step by Step](#)--the Internet Public Library
 If you want an effective, well defined process to follow in completing a research paper, here it is. The following steps are covered: Discovering and Choosing a Topic, Looking for and Forming a Focus, Gathering Information, Preparing to Write, and Writing the Paper. Excellent advice and examples at an easy to use site. Highly recommended!

[A Research Guide for Students](#)--by I Lee
 This site starts with a basic eight-step process for planning and completing a research paper. It is a good place to start if you have never done research before. After you read through the eight steps, however, scroll to the very bottom of the page and you will find a box full of links to other "chapters" in this on-line guide. They include excellent information on things like handling quotations, avoiding plagiarism, creating a works cited list, etc. These extra chapters make this site more comprehensive than the A+ site listed above.

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Internet Research

The Internet is by far the largest and most diverse source of information in the world, but it is also a bewildering maze with as much misinformation and disinformation as reliable information. How do you find what you need? How do you know the information is good? How do you find out who provides the information and what credentials he or she has? The sites listed below provide answers to these and many other questions as well as tutorials, critical thinking guides, and many other resources to help you untangle Internet research.

We have divided this section into three parts:

- General Help** for doing research on the Web
- Using a Search Engine** to find what you need
- Evaluating Internet Sites** to see if the information you have found is worth anything.

General Help

[Navigating the World Wide Web](#)--Imaginary Landscapes, LLC
 A quick, humorous look at the basics of using the Internet. The site focuses on how to search the Net rather than on research questions. If you need a quick overview, this is the place to go. If you want detailed instructions, try the next two items below.

[A Student's Guide to Research with the WWW](#)--Craig Branhan, Saint Louis University

- ASC Services
- Language Lab
- Writing - Reading Lab
- ASC EVC - Indio
- ASC EVC - Mecca/Thermal
- Internet Services
- VASC
 - VASC Reading
 - VASC Writing
 - VASC ESL
 - VASC Languages
 - VASC Math
 - VASC Study Skills
 - **VASC Research & Reference Desk**
- ASC Tutoring Center
- Assessment Testing
- FAQ

This site provides an excellent introduction to Internet research. The information is clear, simple, and comprehensive. Read through the opening page and then scroll down to the Site Index. If you have never done Internet research before, we suggest that you read through all sections of this site before you start.

Tonic: the Online Netskills Interactive Course--Netskills, University of Newcastle

This site was created by Netskills, a company based in the University of Newcastle in jolly old England. It is a free on-line course that uses instruction, exercises, and quizzes to introduce all aspects of the Internet. While it does not focus specifically on research skills, it does provide extensive background on all aspects of navigating and using the Internet, including Listservs, Newsgroups, FTP, and the World Wide Web. Users need to log in to the site in order to track scores on quizzes, etc., but there is no cost.

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Using A Search Engine

Search engines seem simple. Type in a few search words and then click on the "Search" button, right? The next thing you know you are looking at a list of 20,000 sites, and after checking a few, none seem to have what you want. The sites below offer some advice on how to use search engines more effectively.

Guide to Effective Searching on the Internet--From BrightPlanet Corp.

This free set of tutorials from a Web site called "BrightPlanet" provides very clear and easy to follow instruction for using search engines. The practice is not interactive, but the coverage is very thorough. Running through the whole thing is worth while, but plan on spending several hours of work if you do so.

Finding Information on the Internet: a Tutorial--Joe Barker, U.C. Berkeley Library

This tutorial presents the substance of the Internet Workshops offered year-round by the Teaching Library at U.C. Berkeley. There is a lot of reading to do in this site, but the information provided is very good. At several points the tutorial offers worksheets to print out that can be used as research guides. We suggest that you start with "Recommended Search Strategy: Analyze Your Topic and Search With Peripheral Vision." There is also an interactive tutorial on evaluating Web sites. Try it out!

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Evaluating Internet Sites

When you do research in a college library you have an advantage in that everything you look at has been approved by a team of faculty and librarians. You have no such assurance on the Internet. The World Wide Web has no editors; almost anyone with a few dollars and some relatively simple technical skills can put just about any kind of information they want out there. There is as much (or more) bad information out there than good. So how do you tell if the site you are quoting has reliable information? Check out the sites below to find out!

Internet Detective--Developed by the Social Science Information Gateway, hosted by the University of Bristol

This site offers a set of tutorials, including practice exercises and quizzes, on evaluating the quality of information found on Web pages. You have to log in for the program to track your quiz scores, but use of the site is free. Any students who has never used the Internet for research should complete these short exercises. Highly recommended.

The ICYouSee Guide to Critical Thinking About What You See on the Web--John R. Henderson, Ithaco College Library

A funny but effective review of critical thinking and Web research. The tutorial includes clear discussions of the problems related to evaluating Internet sources, sample sites, a "pop" quizz, and exercise assignments. Shorter and not as structured as *Internet Detective* (above), but it doesn't have the printable critical thinking check lists and multiple examples found in *Evaluating Web Resources* below.

Evaluating Web Resources--Jane Alexander and Marsha Ann Tate, Widener University.

This excellent site provides clear methods for evaluating advocacy sites, business and marketing sites, informational sites, news sites, and personal sites. Critical thinking check lists can be printed off for each of these areas, and sample sites are given for each. After reading through the check lists, try clicking on "Links to Additional Web Evaluation Sites" and try your skill evaluating the sample sites they have selected. Which one has the best information, and which the worst?

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Documenting Research & Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is one of the few crimes you can commit in writing a research paper. Most colleges take it quite seriously. A single case of plagiarism could mean an "F" for the paper, an "F" for the course, the voiding of a degree, or expulsion from a program or school. (It is a good idea to find out the policies of your instructors and your college.) The solution to plagiarism is simple, learn how to quote and paraphrase sources correctly and then document where the ideas came from, using MLA, APA, CBE, or other formal documentation formats. The sites below will help you with this sometimes tricky process.

How Not to Plagiarize: Dr. Margaret Procter, Coordinator, Writing Support at the University of Toronto, Canada.

This is a "just text" site, but it gives a thorough and clear explanation of how, and why, you should avoid plagiarism. Read it through, and then to Plagiarism Tutorial below to test if you understand the concepts.

Plagiarism Tutorial: University Libraries, The University of Southern Mississippi

This interactive site includes a pre and post quiz, clear explanations of plagiarism, and some good examples. As you complete the tutorial, you can arrange for the results to be emailed to you.

Plagiarism & You: From the University Library at Penn State.

A few more samples of plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarism.

Avoiding Plagiarism--Sharon Williams, Hamilton College

Here is a short, simple, and accurate definition of plagiarism with some good examples. This is a good place to start if you have no idea what plagiarism is about.

Research, Writing, and Style Guides--by I Lee

This is one section of Mr. Lee's extensive Web site "A Research Guide for Students," which we have already referenced above. This section provides brief explanations and many examples of in-text citation, Works Cited lists, and bibliographic entries according to MLA, APA, Chicago, and Turabian documentation styles. It is very easy to use.

Citation Styles On-Line--Andrew Harnack, Eastern Kentucky University & Eugene Klippinger, Houghton College
This is the clearest and most effective site we know of for the arcane process of documenting research taken from the Internet (i.e. citing such sources properly in research papers and creating useful bibliographic entries). There are extensive explanations and examples of in-text citations and documentation for research--for a wide range of Internet sources. Examples are provided for MLA style, APA style, Chicago Style, and CBE style citations. Use the small buttons (APA MLA, Chicago, CBE) just below the title banner to go to the full explanation of citations methods, or use the index to get examples for citing specific kinds of Internet sites.

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On-Line Reference

If you need quick access to facts and figures, public information, indexes, encyclopedias, databases, etc. on any subject under the sun or beyond, these are the places to go.

Refdesk, The Best Single Source for Facts on the Net--Bob Drudge, editor and developer

If it is straight factual data you need, don't look any further. Refdesk provides an extraordinary collection of online references for just about anything imaginable. Excellent search services cover all their resources, including a wide variety of standard reference tools--dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. Refdesk has so many sources listed in such a tight space that it can be bewildering, but once you get used to the interface, you can quickly track down the information you need.

The Internet Public Library (IPL), Reference Center--University of Michigan School of Information

An excellent and wide selection of reference resources. IPL reference is less confusing than The Refdesk. Be sure to click on "Searching Tools" in the menu on the left and then look at "Pathfinders" or "Searching This Site" for an excellent research guidelines.

The Library of Congress Home Page--Library of Congress

Search the resources of the largest library on Earth. The library of Congress web page offers particularly good resources on history and the arts, a wide range of full-text on-line books, and easy to use search features.

OpposingViews.com

"Each section of www.opposingviews.com is a channel, including politics, society, health, money, and religion. Our point/counter-point format gives each expert a chance to state their information and opinions on an issue. ... Opposing Views brings together the information on the issue, the evidence on each side and their counter-points."

ProCon.org

"ProCon.org is an independent, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity. We provide pros and cons on diverse controversial topics with facts and quotations from thousands of experts. We spend thousands of hours researching hundreds of important subjects so that millions of ProCon.org visitors can make informed decisions on the issues that affect us all. Our sites are 100% free and contain no advertising."

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Guide To Search Engines

Search engines are incredibly efficient fetchers of Web sites. Asking a search engine to find a particular item is like sending your dog to fetch your slippers and having him bring back a shoe store. We only list two here because they are all you are likely to need. (Psst: do you have trouble using search engines? Jump to our Research Page for some sites that train you to use the Web effectively.)

Google

With more than one billion web pages indexed, a lightening fast search, and a simple, uncluttered interface, Google is one of the best search engines available. Try typing in full sentences in the search box, like When was President Ulysses S. Grant born? or How do I write an argumentative essay? or What is Analytical Cubism? Chances are good that a clear answer will be found in the first or second item listed in the search results.

DOGPILE

DOGPILE is a meta search engine. In other words, it searches other search engine data bases. It can access more than twenty other search engines at a time. Search results from each search engine are listed separately, so you will get the first 10 sites listed by Yahoo followed by the first 10 sites from Alta Vista, etc. You can choose to look at additional sites listed by each engine or scroll on to the top 10 of the next search engine in their list. The DOGPILE interface is rather cluttered, and you may have to search down through several search engine results to find what you need, but DOGPILE is one of the widest single searches available. If you don't find what you want at other search engines, always be sure to try DOGPILE before giving up!

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Guide To Internet Directories

A directory is different from a search engine in that it consists of a much smaller set of Web sites that have all been reviewed by some editor. There are generally organized into a series of nested categories and sub-categories. Directories may list fewer sites than search engines, but you can generally be certain that every one will have good, reliable information. The directories listed below all focus around the research needs of college students.

Academic Info--a non profit organization

Simple to use, and very extensive, this directory indexes sites necessary to good college level research "at the undergraduate level or above." This is the first place to go, especially if you are new to using the Internet.

WWW Virtual Library--A non-profit site maintained by Gerard Manning

The Virtual Library is a Directory to many different subject indexes developed by experts in various fields. A great example of the International collaborations made possible with the Internet, this site is also a prime research source for students.

The Librarian's Guide to the Internet--Under the direction of Karen G. Schneider and developed by the Library of California

This excellent site indexes more than 10,000 Internet sites according to carefully defined criteria. A great resource, and easy to use.

Internet Subject Guides--Maintained by Margy MacMillan, Mt. Royal College, Alberta Canada

This is an excellent and easy to use directory to college level resources on the WWW.

The Internet Public Library (IPL), Reference Center--University of Michigan School of Information

Although it indexes fewer sites than INFOMINE (below), IPL is much easier to use. We suggest trying it first and then move to INFOMINE if you don't find what you need.

INFOMINE--Resources developed by librarians from U.C., Wake Forest U., Cal. State, the U. of Detroit, Mercy College, and other colleges and universities

Developed by the University of California, INFOMINE indexes over 20,000 internet sites. All have been reviewed librarians from various colleges and universities. It supports both browsing and keyword searches, but is a little complicated to use. Fortunately, they provide a nice guide. Here is how to find it. From the site's home page, click on "About INFOMINE" just beneath the banner title, and on the next page click on "How to use INFOMINE."

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Free On-Line Literature

Okay, we went a bit over board here, listing several different sites, but we could not believe the deals we found as we searched this category. The sites below give you access to "e-texts," the entire texts of public domain books (books that are no longer under copyright). Fiction, poetry, non-fiction, reference books--thousands are free and available for download or printing or just to be read. Need the full text of *Moby Dick*, or *Hamlet*, or *The Wizard of Oz*? How about *Crime and Punishment* in the original Russian? It is all here. And the last two sites in our list offer new works of literature composed specifically for electronic media. Check it out!

The only thing we ask is that you not print any text in any College of the Desert lab. Many of these books run to hundreds of pages, and printing them ties up both the server and the printer in our labs.

Project Gutenberg

Over 100,000 books and documents, 28,000 free E-text books. PG was one of the original efforts to put all of literature online for free. While most of their texts are in English, there is a considerable amount of material from other cultures and languages.

ManyBooks.net

This is another great source of free E-text books. Most of these books came from Guttenberg, but the interface for this site is much cleaner and easier to use. Most author names are linked out to Wikipedia, so you can quickly get biographical information on names you do not know. Lots of unexpected items too, like State of the Union addresses of American Presidents (Under Author, go Carter, Jimmy, for instance). Or look under Works Project Administration to find a list of Slave Narratives that were gathered by ethnographers in the 1940s.

Bartleby.com, Great Books Online

Bartleby does not have the largest selection of books available, but the easy-to-use interface and good search tools make it a pleasure to use. The site includes fiction, poetry, non-fiction, and reference works.

The Internet Public Library (IPL), Books Section--University of Michigan School of Information

The IPL Books Collection (formerly known as Online Texts) contains over 20,000 titles that can be browsed by author, by title, or by Dewey Decimal Classification. They can also be searched using key words. This index links to many other literature archives on the Web. It is a relatively new site within IPL, and is still under construction, but with so many titles available, you have to look it over. Use their Help Page for instructions on searching the database.

eMule.com--The Poetry Archives

eMule is all poetry--Over 5,000 poems by over 150 poets. The texts are reproduced in a 10pt Ariel Unicode MS font that is hard to read on the Web page, but when printed or downloaded into Word they are quite readable. The site supports author, title, and subject searches by key word. There is also a large forum of discussion groups, information on authors, and interpretations for some poems.

eServer.org--A non-profit organization that is the collaborative work of many authors.

"The EServer is an e-publishing co-op based at Iowa State University where hundreds of writers, editors and scholars gather to publish over 35,000 works free of charge.." Although it includes historical documents, many of its resources are new documents often written directly for eServer. Authors are encouraged to submit original works and have the option of editing and maintaining them. This site typifies a whole new wave of publishing on-line. Very trendy and interesting. Excellent full text topic searches available.

Electronic Literature Directory--Editors - Hayles, Montfort, Rettberg, and Strickland

This directory focuses almost entirely on creative works of literature written directly for electronic media. They include hypertexts, interactive texts, kinetic or animated poems, reader collaborative literature, and other "new" media. Very nouveau. They only include traditional literary texts if they have been adapted to electronic media,

for instance by adding a streaming audio of the work read aloud. Authors regularly add to and maintain these texts.

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Typing Programs

[TypingWeb.com](#) - Free online typing tutor. Simple, good instruction - ideal for beginners.

[Learn2Type.com](#) - FREE Web site that helps you master the skills of touch typing. This is one of the few programs I found that separate the text from the typing, just like "real" typing tests!

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