

Finding Sources

There are some websites that are useful to cite in academic papers, but there are many websites that you shouldn't cite in an academic paper. Websites you may cite in a researched essay include sites like The United States Department of Commerce or NASA. Sites that are not good to use are sites like personal blogs, social media, open-source websites, or forums.

A website URL can tell you a lot about the credibility of a source. If you are on a government website (.gov), people usually feel that the information is more credible than what is written on a commercial website (.com). Educational websites (.edu) and organization websites (.org) are sometimes credible, but you should be careful. You can narrow a Google search by domain extension if you simply type the extension after your search term (e.g., Poverty .gov) in the Google search bar.

The website domain extension alone isn't enough to know if the site is a good source. For example, many newspapers and encyclopedias use the .com extension and can still be good sources.

Other things you can look at are references, authors, and dates. If you read an educational website that lists references, that is an extra level of confidence that you can trust what they say is true. If you see an author, that is also usually a good sign. Finally, look for a date of publication. If the website was last updated in 1990, using that website probably isn't a good idea. Look for things that are more current, or are at least updated regularly.

What about Wikipedia?

Wikipedia is an excellent place to begin your preliminary research for a topic (but not a source you should cite). Wikipedia can offer background knowledge that will help you decide quickly if you are interested in a topic. If there are references listed at the end of the article, those references would be an excellent place to start looking for sources you can cite.

Most teachers will ask you to not cite Wikipedia for several reasons. First, it can change (and does change) frequently. When you write an essay and list references, people should be able to look up your references for more information. If someone looks up a Wikipedia article, it may be different from when you wrote your essay.

Academic Searches

Journal articles (especially those from a respected journal) and books are often considered much more credible than general websites, so it will strengthen your writing to use them.

You may find that journal articles and books are very difficult to understand. It is helpful to start by reading the abstract of an article before you read the entire article. The abstract will give a brief summary of the article. Some students skip the abstract and start reading with the beginning of the introduction, but this will slow you down in your research.

In order to find academic research articles, you should use a library database or Google Scholar. The trick to finding research when you use an academic database is limiting your search to find useful results. You can use quotation marks, asterisks, or boolean search terms (e.g., AND) to refine your search. For example, if you want to

write an essay and describe various types of earthquakes, you will get different results if you use these different search terms:

types of earthquakes =	any articles that use the words <i>type, of, or earthquake</i>
“types of earthquakes” =	only articles that use the exact phrase <i>types of earthquakes</i>
types AND earthquakes =	any articles that mention BOTH <i>types</i> and <i>earthquakes</i>
type* AND earthquake* =	any articles that use the words <i>type</i> or <i>types</i> as well as <i>earthquake</i> or <i>earthquakes</i>

There are research tutorials at <https://ysearch.lib.byu.edu>

Tip: Keeping Track of Sources

There are many different ways to keep track of your sources. For this exercise, you will practice using a table or spreadsheet.

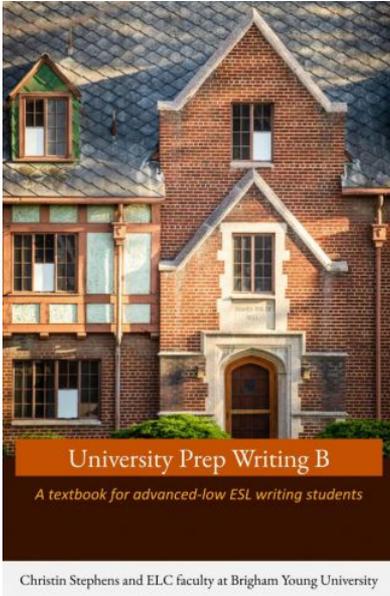
1. Create a table in your word document or create a separate spreadsheet that looks like the one below.
2. In the first column, make a list of possible search terms you might use to find sources.
3. As you use the search terms, click on articles with titles that sound relevant.
4. Read only the abstract. If you need more information, the introduction and conclusion may be helpful at this stage.
5. If the article abstract sounds connected to your thesis, copy and paste the names of article in the second column.
6. Add the name of the journal or website in the third column.
7. In the fourth column, you can make a note of what part of your outline the source would best support (ex. the first topic sentence, the opposite point of view, introducing a definition of

1 Exercise: Find Sources

Using a table like the one below, find **THREE** sources to support the following thesis statement:

- There has been many different ways for which COVID-19 pandemic impacted the society some of those includes economy, mental health and the necessity of adaptation.

Search Term	Name of Article	Name of Journal/Website	Section of Essay I Think It Will Support
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University Prep Fall Writing B.
https://edtechbooks.org/up_writing_fall