

# When Researching

Why research? Many people have opinions, but those who support them with evidence have the most power to persuade others that what they maintain is correct.

When researching, you must sift through many different sources to choose the ones that fit best with your needs. Also, it is important to ensure your sources are reliable and valid. In other words, do not be careless and choose the articles at the top of the list, assuming they are the best. Sometimes you have to search for a while before you find what works well. This is time well spent because once you have research that will fit your topic and point of view, and then it becomes much easier to write your paper.

As you research, be aware of the following important issues to ensure you use only the best and most appropriate sources:

- **Reliability:**
  - Can you trust the source to provide non-biased, well-supported information?
  
- **Be Aware of the Source:**
  - Make sure the credentials and expertise of the individuals or organizations running a website are legitimate. Do not take websites at face value. Research who created them and who contributes to them. (For instance, recently a man who claimed to be a professor with a doctorate in Theology and had edited many “Wikipedia” entries turned out to be a college dropout living at home.)
  - It is a national scholarly journal or small-town newspaper? Is your source the website of a nationally recognized organization, or is some guy running it out of his garage at home?
  
- **Be aware of bias:**
  - Often a person or group has something to gain from maintaining one perspective on the issue. Because of an intense personal investment, individuals may do one or all of the following:
    - Provide only one perspective
    - Provide only part of the evidence, selecting what best represents their perspective
    - Ignore key issues
    - Provide misleading or false information