

# Ivy Tech Community College Libraries

North Central Indiana

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<http://cc.ivytech.edu>

## SEVEN STEPS TO GREAT RESEARCH

1. Identify & develop your topic.
2. Find background information.
3. Locate books using the catalog.
4. Locate articles using databases.
5. Find Internet resources.
6. Evaluate what you have found.
7. Cite your sources.

Developing a basic search strategy enables you to research a specific topic in an organized manner. Suggested steps, and tips are listed below and librarians are always available to assist you.

### Identify & Develop Your Topic

Be prepared to be flexible with your topic. If it is too broad or vague, you will find too much information and will need to narrow your topic. If it is too specific, you will not find enough information and will need to broaden your topic.

### Find Background Information

Background information is used to gain a deeper understanding of your topic. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and handbooks are all examples of reference resources you can use to locate background information. Reference resources are available on the *Articles, books, images* page of the Virtual Library.

### Locate Books

Books provide broader and more in-depth coverage of subjects than do articles, although information will not be the most current. You can locate books and electronic books (e-books) using IvyCat, the Ivy Tech library catalog. E-book collections are also located on the *Articles, books, images* page of the Virtual Library.

### Locate Articles

Magazine, journal, and newspaper articles provide current information about a topic. Journal articles (also called scholarly or peer-reviewed) will cover specific fields of research. Popular magazines and newspapers publish articles of general interest and current events. Article databases are available on the *Articles, books, images* page of the Virtual Library.

### Find Internet Resources

It is recommended that you use the library resources to find Internet sites that are suitable for academic research. IvyLynks, located on the main Virtual Library page, contains collections of websites selected by Ivy Tech librarians. Links to websites are also included in the library resource guides.

### Evaluate What You Have Found

Before you use a book, article, or web site for your paper or speech, evaluate its usefulness for your particular research needs. Apply the following criteria to your source:

- **Purpose:** Was the resource written to inform, present opinions, report research or sell products?
- **Authority:** What are the author's credentials?
- **Accuracy:** Is the information correct and free from errors?
- **Timeliness:** Is the information current enough?
- **Coverage:** Does the source cover the topic in depth or is it a broad overview?
- **Objectivity:** Does the information show bias or does it present multiple viewpoints?

Also decide if you have enough information to complete your assignment. If not, you can broaden your topic and search for additional resources using new key words.

### Cite Your Sources

Citing or documenting the sources used in your research serves two purposes, it gives proper credit to the authors of the materials used, and it allows those who are reading your work to duplicate your research and locate the sources that you have listed as references.

Knowingly representing the work of others as your own is plagiarism.

Two common formats for citing sources are MLA (Modern Language Association) and APA (American Psychological Association). MLA and APA format guides are available on the *Handouts: citing sources and library resources* page of the Virtual Library. Be sure to check with your professor to find out which format you will be expected to use.