



How to Plan Good Projects

How to Look up Information

The “look it up” method is good if you want to find out facts. It is also good if you want to know what other researchers tried and found.



How to search

It is important to have a search plan. In libraries and on the Internet, you type in words or phrases to help you find what you want. It is important to pick the right words to look up. Think about your question or topic. Write down the important words. Are there other words or sets of words that mean the same? Write them down under the important words. You may need to try different words to help you find what you want to find. It all depends on what words the writer used to talk about that topic.

If you type in only the main topic, you may get lots more books or web sites to look at than you have time for, or very little. How much you get sometimes depends on where you search. If you look up a topic on the Internet, some search engines may be more helpful than others. A “search engine” looks at lots of web sites to find the words you typed in. Some libraries have more books or articles on a topic than others. How they organize the list of their materials makes a difference.

Pretend you want to know what workshops have been made up to teach about self-advocacy. If you search the listing for most libraries and type in ‘self-advocacy’ you will get only a few books to look at. Some magazines have articles about self-advocacy. But you may have to look in different listings to find out about the library’s magazine articles on self-advocacy. It is good to talk to a librarian about the best way to search for what you want.



The Internet is also a good place to look for information. If you type in ‘self-advocacy’ to search the Internet using the Google search engine, you may get 862 places to look. That’s a lot. If you want to find out about training on self-advocacy, then you would type in ‘self-advocacy’ and ‘training.’ That may give you 824 places to look. That’s still a lot. And most of them will not tell you the answer you want. So you must be ready to spend some time and look at a lot of web sites.

Find what you need to know.

Once you have found a place that has information that may answer your question, read it carefully. Sometimes papers are very long and use lots of big words. There may be a summary at the start or end of the paper.



Papers are often divided into parts. Each part has a label. The label will tell you what that part of the paper has in it.

Often the first sentence in each paragraph will tell you what that paragraph is about. You can look for the paragraph that talks about what you want to know. It is good to copy down what they wrote.

Think about it.

When you read a paper, you need to look at why they said what they did. How did they find out that answer? Did they do research where they asked or observed people or did a test? Did they read the answer somewhere else? Is it just their opinion? If it is just their opinion, then it may not be the true answer, even if it agrees with what you think. So look for the answer in other places.



If they did research, did they do a good job? Look at the method they used. Did they ask good questions? Were the questions fair, or did they make one answer sound better than others? Did they talk to the right kind of people? For example, did they only talk to people with disabilities who can read, and then say their answer is true of all people with disabilities, even those who can not read? Can their results mean something different than what they think? Sometimes there is more than one way to make sense of results.

If you think that they made mistakes in how they did their research, then it is bad research. And the answer they got is probably not the true answer. Just because it is in a book or in print, does not mean it is right.

What if you do not like the answer, but their research was good? If the research is good, then the answer is probably true.

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