



DONCASTER
COLLEGE



Learning Resource Centres

Using the

Internet for Research



What can you do on the Internet?

The Internet is used for a wide variety of activities:

- ◆ Shopping
- ◆ Socialising
- ◆ News
- ◆ Entertainment
- ◆ Sharing
- ◆ Research

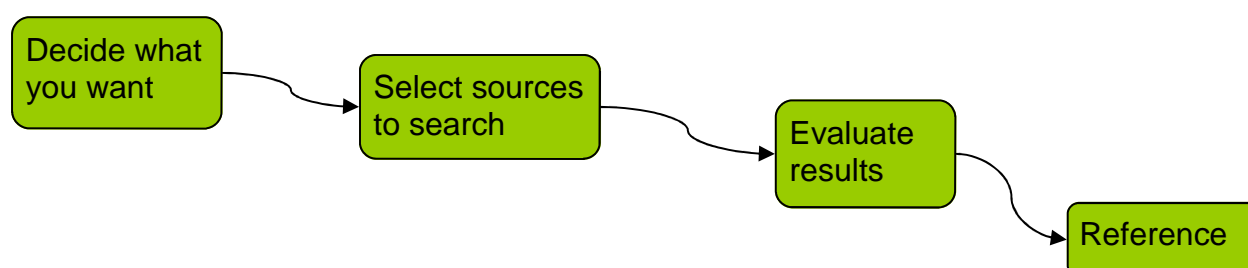
The Internet is available to anyone and it is becoming easier and easier for anyone to publish something on the Internet. This raises questions about:

- ◆ Authority—who has written it? Are they qualified?
- ◆ Quality—is it correct and accurate?
- ◆ Availability—will it still be available in 2 weeks or 6 months time?

Using the Internet for Research

When you are using the Internet to look for information for your assignments and research you need to think carefully about how you will search for it and how you will decide to select the most appropriate resources.

This guide will help you to make the right choice.



Decide what you want



- ◆ Think about the title or question of your assignment.
- ◆ Break it down into different sections.
- ◆ Identify the keywords and phrases that apply to it.
- ◆ Consider how you could combine your keywords.

See the LRC worksheet **7 Steps to Searching** to help you.

Select the right source to search

Identify what sources you want to search for your information.

Organisation Websites

You may already have come across or have been told about websites for a specific subject. Start your searching with the websites recommended by your tutors. Some examples may be:

- ◆ UK Government at <http://www.direct.gov.uk>
- ◆ National Statistics at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>
- ◆ National Health Service eLibrary at <http://www.library.nhs.uk>

Blackboard

Check out your course folder on Blackboard or the LRCs' e-Library on Blackboard. You may find links to websites that have been recommended by your tutor or librarian.

Subject Gateways

Subject gateways are websites that contain lists of web links for a subject area. They are often set up by experts and the websites listed have been reviewed and recommended for research and education. One of the best examples that covers a wide range of subjects is:



[Contacts](#) [Help desk](#) [Policy](#) [Site map](#) [Survey](#)

Quick links



●● Science and Technology



●● Arts and Humanities



●● Social Sciences



●● Health and Life Sciences

- ◆ Intute at <http://www.intute.ac.uk>

Intute at URL: www.intute.ac.uk (accessed: 16/01/2008)

- ◆ Google at <http://www.google.co.uk>
- ◆ Ask at <http://uk.ask.com>
- ◆ Yahoo at <http://uk.yahoo.com>
- ◆ Exalead at <http://www.exalead.co.uk/search>

Using Search Engines

Search engines are very powerful tools and can help you to find information for your assignments. They can return millions of web pages that match your search terms, but you will never have enough time to read through this many so you need to make your search as relevant as possible. Here are a few hints:

Check out the help pages

- not all search engines work the same way; find out how to use the search engine effectively by checking out the help pages

Select the "UK only" option if there is one

- some search engines have a UK only option; this will limit your search to UK websites



Google at URL: <http://www.google.co.uk> (accessed: 16/01/2008)

Use the advanced options

- you can often combine search terms and limit your search by using the advanced search options

Limit your search to specific types of website

- limiting your search to specific websites may make your searching more relevant. You can limit your search to look for websites with particular codes in their web address.

Web Address Codes:

Example: **<http://www.don.ac.uk>**

Organisational codes tell you about the nature of the organisation

- ◆ **.ac, .edu** academic or educational servers for research
- ◆ **.co, .com** commercial servers for trade organisations
- ◆ **.gov** government servers for policy, guidance and regulations
- ◆ **.org** non-governmental, non-profit making organisations for research and support services

Country codes can tell you where the server is based

- .ca** Canada
- .de** Germany
- .fr** France
- .uk** United Kingdom

This web address tells you that this is an academic institution in the UK—it is Doncaster College.

Evaluating Information Sources

Once you have found some information on the Internet you need to evaluate it to check that it is an appropriate piece of information for your assignment.

- ◆ Is it relevant?
Will the information help you to answer your question?
- ◆ Is it authoritative?
Can you find out who the author is and check their qualifications?
- ◆ Is it accurate?
Does it make sense?
- ◆ Is the date within the time period you are investigating?
Are you looking for current information or historic material? Does the information that you have found match the time period that you are looking for?
- ◆ Is it biased?
Do you understand why this information is being published? Consider whether someone is trying to sell you something or convince you of a particular argument. Do you need to do more research to find a balance of information?

Saving References

It is very important that you save the reference of the web page you are using at the time you access it. Remember that web pages can be deleted or moved around easily and you don't know that the web page will still be available when you come to finish off your assignment ready to hand it in.

Reference Information

- ◆ Title—find the title of the web page
- ◆ Author— find out who has written it
- ◆ Publisher—find out who the organisation is behind the website
- ◆ Year of publication— when was this information published?
- ◆ URL or web address—what is the web address?
- ◆ Date that you accessed it—note down the date that you have found the information

It can often be very difficult to find out all this information. Investigate more of the web site to see if you can find it. Check:

- ◆ Can you see an organisation code or country code in the web address? This may help you to decide what type of organisation it is.
- ◆ Home page—to see what the main purpose of the organisation is.
- ◆ About Us page—this should give you details about the publishing organisation; its aims and objectives and maybe its authors.
- ◆ Contact Us page— this should give you confidence about the organisation.

Try to find as much information as you can but don't worry if you can't find everything. See the Harvard Referencing guides for more information.