**IzTech Academic Writing Center**

**Writing Resources**

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**Conducting Research**

Research often begins after you have come up with a research question or a statement of the problem to be investigated. However, your research question or thesis will likely not be clear until you have conducted preliminary research. Reading articles will help you understand what research has already been done (which will help you write your **literature review**), and what is missing in the research that needs to be studied (which will help you write the **gap in current research** and decide on your **thesis**). Reading extensively will also improve your writing and knowledge.

**Resources for Research**

Once you know your topic, problem, or general area of interest, you can begin “**reviewing the literature**” to get a better idea of what you should focus on. Reviewing the literature means looking at the research related to that topic.

In determining whether to use a source in your research, bear in mind **the four “R’s**” of research sources: reputable, reliable, recent and relevant.

* **Reputable**: Reputable sources are usually associated with well-known organizations or acknowledged experts in their field. Peer-reviewed journals are a reputable source.
* **Reliable**: Information from reliable sources can be trusted as accurate and free of bias.
* **Recent**: Although currency is more important to some topics than others, recent information is generally superior to older information.
* **Relevant**: The information in relevant sources is directly related to your thesis and/or main points.

**Databases**

A **reliable source** for your research is an academic/scholarly **book** or **journal** (a small collection of articles), published by a well-known organization. These are **peer-reviewed** (approved by other academicians or experts in the field).

Fortunately, there are many **databases** in your field that have already done the job of choosing the best articles and books for you. Good academic **databases** are search engines full of academic **articles** from the best academic **journals**. For instance, **ScienceDirect** is a database that includes peer-reviewed and edited scientific and mathematical articles from top journals. **JStor**, on the other hand, is perfect for those studying the social sciences, like sociology or literature. **Proquest** has articles from most fields. Our library website lists databases by subject, and you can also ask your professor which one he or she uses. You may be familiar with **Google Scholar** (a database of academic articles and books) and **Google Books** (a database of books); those are great sources too, but they include a wider variety of subjects and source types, so they can be difficult to pick through.

You may also find hard copies of books and journals in the library. However, most of your research will likely be done online, since reputable journals publish articles on the internet. Note, though, that you have to be on campus to access many databases. If you want to read an article at home, you can first save it to your computer while on campus.

**Recording Important Information as you Research**

Keeping records during the research phase of writing allows you to read material efficiently as well as save time when you write your paper.

Record notes that include the following information:

* A direct quotation, summary or paraphrase of the main idea
* Complete names of author(s) and/or editor(s)
* Complete name of the book, journal, magazine, newspaper or website
* The title and full publication details, including date and edition, publisher
* The page numbers you consulted

**Referencing software tools** such as **Endnote**, Mendeley, and RefWorks can help you record and organize your research and, later on, cite and reference your research in your article. For tutorials and more information on how to use Endnote for free, contact the IzTech Library.