

Internet Searching Tips

Individuals and class groups who use the Writing Center computers to conduct internet searches for research topics for school assignments face several obstacles and challenges as they attempt to gather information:

Obstacle 1:

My teacher tells us that information from Wikipedia is not acceptable.

Solution and Answer:

Wikipedia is an internet based encyclopedia, written and edited by volunteers and subject to change by nearly everyone who accesses this source. It is possible that after reading a topic on Wikipedia, you could submit additional information to add to that topic, or you could submit counter-information which contradicts or challenges the information already on the website.

As a result, there is no control or peer-editing of information which can be input to Wikipedia. In order that information you wish to include in a research paper will be acceptable, that information must be **CREDIBLE...capable of being believed; plausible, worthy of confidence, reliable**. If any member of the "internet public" can submit information to Wikipedia, who is to say that person is believable, credible?

As a handy, readily available source of information Wikipedia can be useful. If you're just looking for a definition or information and want it in a hurry, by all means use Wikipedia. **However, don't quote Wikipedia in your essay or list a Wikipedia entry on your Works Cited page, because your teacher will not accept that entry as a credible piece of information.**

Reference: Wikipedia General Disclaimer: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:General_disclaimer

Reliable, acceptable information is that which comes from:

Published works...books, collections of essays, newspapers and other periodicals, published reference works (encyclopedias and dictionaries), works of art, musical compositions. Such works are subject to editorial review before publication.

Non-published works...recorded interviews, radio or TV interviews and programs, movies and films, documentaries on video, sound recordings, music videos, advertisements;

Electronic sources...online encyclopedias, full text articles in online newspapers and periodicals or from a journal database such as SIRS or ProQuest, essays from online databases such as MagillOnline and the Gale Literary Criticism Series, credible websites (those listing original publication dates, those published by corporations, sponsoring organizations, academic institutions [those from a .edu domain]) **NOTE: Information from websites with an obvious agenda (e.g. political action groups, commercial organizations marketing products or services) or that from personal websites and blogs may not be acceptable.**

Obstacle 2:

Terms which I enter in a google search are sometimes blocked by the District 95 network system.

Examples: Students in a P.E./Health Class working on a project on street drugs are usually blocked if they enter a search term such as "marijuana" or "crack cocaine". Or, students working on a research project on video games for an English or Social Studies project, may encounter a block when a search term such as "nintendo" or "xbox" is entered.

Solutions:

When entering the search term, place the words "essay on" in front of the term. For example: "essay on crack cocaine" or "essay on video games" may get you results. **NOTE: Some of the returns from this search may yield links which will also be blocked. However, if you see a link to an academic institution or a credible publication or media outlet (e.g. Chicago Tribune, msnbc.com, pbs.org, npr.org) you will likely get to useful information.**

Browse to an academic institution...e.g. University of Illinois www.uiuc.edu, credible publication (e.g. chicagotribune.com), or a credible media outlet (e.g. msnbc.com, pbs.org, npr.org) and enter your search term in that website's search window.