

Introduction to Research



- In today's tutorial, we will focus on:
 - Getting started: how to begin your research
 - ✦ Kind of sources
 - ✦ How and where to find them
 - ✦ How to know whether a source is useful or not
 - Strategic Reading
 - ✦ Getting the most out of your sources
 - ✦ Identifying main point(s)
 - From Reading to Writing
 - ✦ Apply critical reading skills to your own writing assignments
 - ✦ Thesis statements

Getting started



- **READ THE QUESTION!!!!** Make sure you know what you are expected to do in your assignments.
- **Start early.** Don't wait until a few days before the due date to start doing your research.
- **Give yourself time for:**
 - **Prewriting**
 - ✦ Thinking about the question, and how you want to answer it
 - ✦ Finding your sources
 - ✦ Making an outline
 - **Writing**
 - ✦ Formulating your thesis statement
 - ✦ Writing the introduction, body, and conclusion
 - **Post-Writing**
 - ✦ Re-reading and editing your essay
 - ✦ Have someone else read your essay and offer a critique
 - ✦ Check for formatting, clarity, grammar, and punctuation
 - ✦ Check for correct referencing

What sources should I use?



- Information for assignments can come from many different sources:
 - Textbooks
 - Other books
 - Journal articles
 - Other sources like films, newspapers, and websites BUT THESE MUST BE USED WITH CAUTION
- The most useful sources are usually identified by your lecturer. They are given in reading lists from lectures or study guides. These sources have been hand-picked for the course, and so are likely to be particularly relevant. Use these as a starting point.
- They are usually ‘academic’, meaning that they come from a recognised authority in the subject and have been vetted by other authorities (peer-reviewed). Academic sources are generally reliable and thorough, making them valuable for your research.
- Not all sources are created equal. They can be out of date, or offer only a limited perspective. They can be inaccurate, or even completely wrong. When looking for information, [evaluate the quality of sources](#) that you use.

How can I find good sources?



- The two primary places to look are:
 - The Auckland University Libraries
 - ✦ There are several libraries around campus! Depending on your topic, you may find useful sources in several of these.
 - ✦ Many important academic sources, especially books and chapters in edited volumes, are not available in full online.
 - ✦ You should use at least one book—textbook, academic book by a single author, edited volume (with various contributing authors)—for your essay assignment(s). This means ACTUALLY going to the library!!!
 - Online Databases for Academic Journals
 - ✦ Accessed through University Library Webpage, or through Google Scholar (NOT the same as Google!!)
 - ✦ These are academic journals, just the same as if you went to the library and pulled them from the shelf. They are annual, biannual, quarterly, or monthly and have an issue number and often a volume number. These should be cited IN FULL, *NOT* with a URL

How do I know if my sources are “academic”?



- **Academic sources are:**
 - **Authoritative:** academic sources identify the qualifications and expertise of the writer. A source written by a recognised expert in a field is more likely to be trustworthy (although expertise should never be accepted blindly – you still must read critically!).
 - **Sourced:** academic writing is careful to credit the origins of information and ideas, usually by means of a reference list or bibliography.
 - **Peer-reviewed:** other academics have read the source and checked it for accuracy. Before publication in an academic journal, for example, an article is checked by a panel of referees. Academic books are checked by editors and other reviewers.
 - **Objective:** academic sources aim to examine a topic fairly. This does not mean that they never take a side, but that the source does not ignore alternative positions on the topic.
 - **Written for academics:** academic sources target university lecturers, students, and professionals interested in the theoretical side of a topic.

Types of Academic Sources



- The most common forms of academic source are
 - Books
 - Journal articles
 - Published reports
- Sources such as newspaper articles, magazine articles, opinion pieces, and websites are not commonly academic, although there are some exceptions. In general, though, such sources should be *approved* by your lecturer or tutor before you use them in a research assignment.
- It can help to consider the purpose of the source. Academic writing aims to inform. It does not aim to sell something, or present one person's opinion independent of evidence or logic.

Evaluate your sources



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

How do I know if my source is useful?



- First, you need to know what it is that you need to know! Have a clear idea of what your QUESTION is and what sort of argument you'd like to make.
- Learn to read strategically (more on this in a minute) and quickly assess the main points of an article, chapter or book so you don't waste time on sources that can't help you
- Make sure it is reliable, academic, and reasonably up-to-date
 - While some “classic” articles are still useful and relevant, ideas/approaches/methodologies/terminology all change over time, so some older sources may no longer be helpful, or may have to be used more carefully. Look at some more recent work in the same area to help you assess the validity and usefulness of publications dated more than about 10-15 years ago.

Personal Experience



- Many first-time students rely only on their own personal experience when writing an assignment.
- While it is important to provide your own perspective and interpretations, you **cannot** depend solely on experience to further your argument.
- It is possible (and, often, important) to present your own position on a topic, but that position should be supported by **evidence** from other sources.

Breaking Down Your Readings



What are some of the challenges of reading academic articles?

"It's too difficult"

"I lose track of what the author is saying"

"I get so far (1 or 2 pages) then find I can't make any sense of it"

*"I find I have to keep going back over stuff
I've just read because I can't see what the author is saying"*

"After a couple of pages I lose interest"

<http://www.lenmholmes.org.uk>



Academic Reading



- One major reason for such problems is that students attempt to read the article in the wrong way. **They try to read it as if it were a short story, or novel or newspaper report** (e.g., on a soccer match, or about the latest troubles of some celebrity or other). That is, they start at the beginning and try to read through to the end.
- **Key point: academic articles cannot be read effectively in the same way as a short story, a novel or a newspaper report.**
- Secondly, the contents of an academic article cannot be grasped by a single reading. You have to engage with it several times - but in different ways.

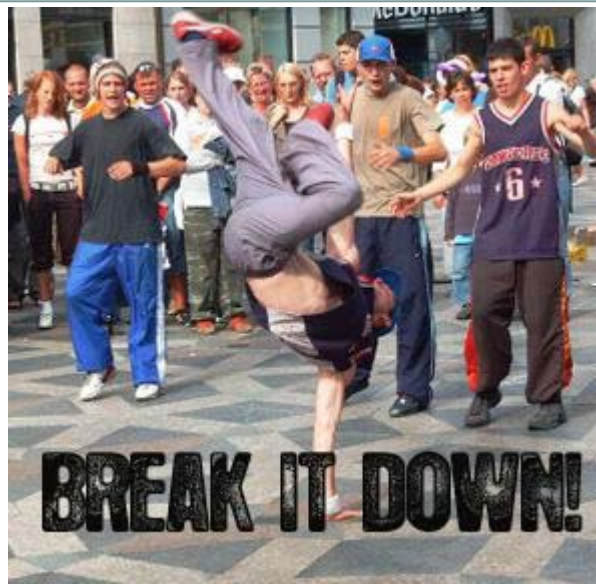
One of the primary reasons assignments get low marks is that the student doesn't show that they understand the author's main points.

Could you explain the essence of the article to a friend who studies something completely different what the article is about? Your parents? A secondary school student?

You have to do more than just repeat the author's own words. You have to be able to *apply* what they have said to your *own* argument, as well as other (sometimes conflicting) sources.



**Don't stress,
undress! Take out
the "layers" to get
to the heart of the
article's argument**



HANDOUT: STRATEGIC READING

Instructions:

1. Read abstract/introduction. Find the thesis statement...in a maximum of three sentences what is the article about?
2. Assess: Will it help me to answer my question? How?
3. Read through paragraphs on second page of handout. Pull out the meaning without the jargon and complex sentences. Come up with a sentence that sums up the essence of each paragraph.

Conclusion of Article: the big picture message



“Standard accounts that depict 1960s rock as the soundtrack to a revolutionary movement of white youth, however, have limited serious consideration of rock’s African American influences and performers. As John J. Sheinbaum argues, the conventional narrative’ of 1960s rock ‘reasserts largely segregated spheres of activity in the mid-1960s at the same time that it disproportionately values those spheres’ (Sheinbaum 2002, p. 111). Stepping away from this reductive view suggests that **the story of the rock revolution is more ambiguous** than either cynics or romantics would have it. **Slick’s blackface routine, in which she seems to play at revolution by imitating African American radicals, exemplifies the frequent emptiness and arrogance of rock’s politics.** Jefferson Airplane’s music, however, often reflected a respectful and thoughtful **effort**, not simply to revive or mimic various aspects of black music, but **to creatively synthesise them into new forms of expression.** If rock musicians such as Jefferson Airplane tore down walls during the 1960s, they did so as much through continued exploration of African American musical tradition as through utopian visions of political and cultural revolution.”

How you *Read* should be reflected in how you *write*!



- **Introduction: this is what tells your reader what you are writing about.**
 - It introduces the topic of the essay
 - It gives some general context or background information
 - It should make your reader interested in what you have to say
 - It can present a plan or “roadmap” of the essay
- **It should include a **thesis statement**.**
 - This is the most important sentence in the introduction
 - It states the specific topic AND what YOU are going to argue
 - It should also give the reader an idea of how your essay will be organized.

A good introduction:



“In the burgeoning literature on ‘tradition’ both within the Pacific and without, there is a persistent spectre of inauthenticity. In the discourse of Pacific peoples and in the discourse of Western commentators, contrasts are made between true tradition and the invented artifact, between culture as a way of life as ‘simply living’ and culture as a reified symbol of a way of life, between tradition as inheritance from the ancestors and tradition as the manipulative rhetoric of contemporary politicians. In this paper I offer a challenge to this dichotomy—first because a notion of true tradition entails a way of seeing Pacific cultures as unitary essences (cf, Handler and Linnekin 1984); second, because it concords with a view of Pacific peoples as peoples without history before the West brought ‘social change,’ progress, and economic development (see Wolf 1982); and third because it equates unself-consciousness with authenticity (and by implication self-consciousness with inauthenticity.”

Jolly, Margaret. 1992. Specters of Inauthenticity. In *Voyaging Through the Contemporary Pacific*. David Hanlon and Geoffrey M. White, eds. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 274-279)