

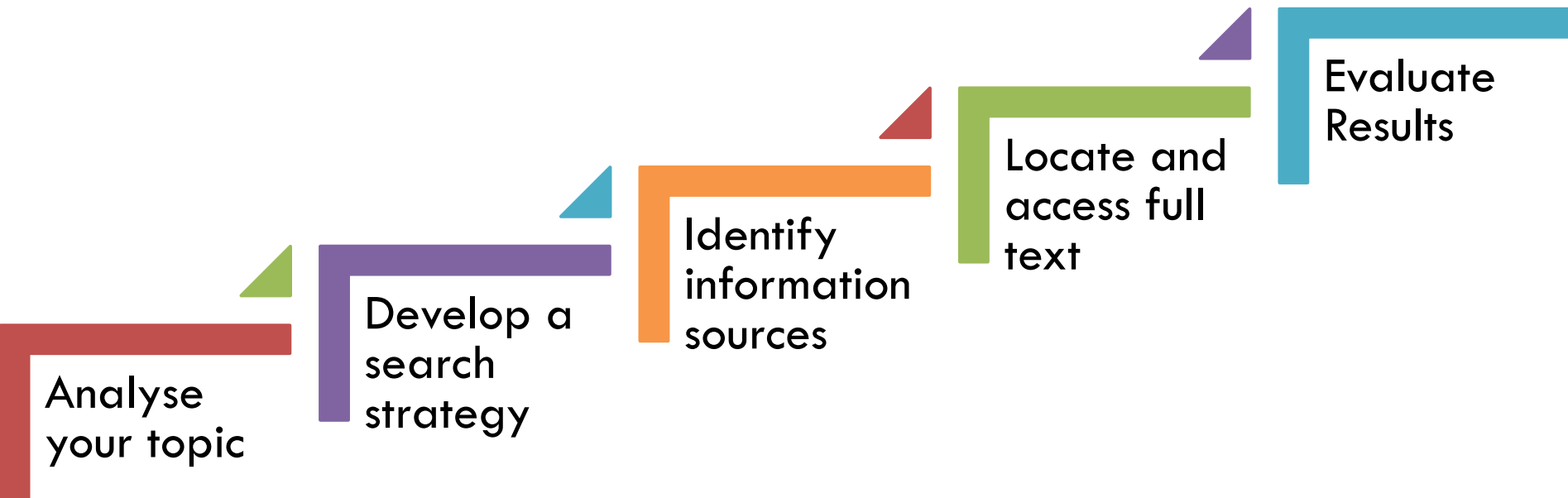
INFORMATION SOURCES





The Research Process

Steps



1. Analyse your topic

- What is the question asking you and what do you already know about the topic?
- Consider the scope of the information you require?
- What area or field is the research being conducted in?

2. Developing a research strategy

1. Identify the main concepts or keywords



2. Compile a list of alternative terms



3. Use truncation



4. Combine with boolean to form a search expression

2.1 Identify the main concepts or keywords

- You will need to think about your research topic and identify the key concepts.
- Example
- How does **inequality** affect **educational outcomes**?

2.2 Compile a list of alternative terms

- Searching for information will often involve searching different combinations of terms.

Concept 1:
Inequality

Concept 2:
Education

2.2 Compile a list of alternative terms

- *Alternative terminology*
- *Alternative spelling*
- *Plurals*
- *Abbreviations*

2.3 Use truncation

- To broaden your search you may wish to substitute variant endings on a term with an asterisk: *.
- Example
 - ▣ Learn* = learn, learns, learning, learner.

2.4 Combine with boolean to form a search expression

- Unlike Google, most databases require you to connect keywords or phrases with "boolean operators".
- The boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT can be used to broaden and narrow your search.
- **AND**: finds records that contains all the words specified.

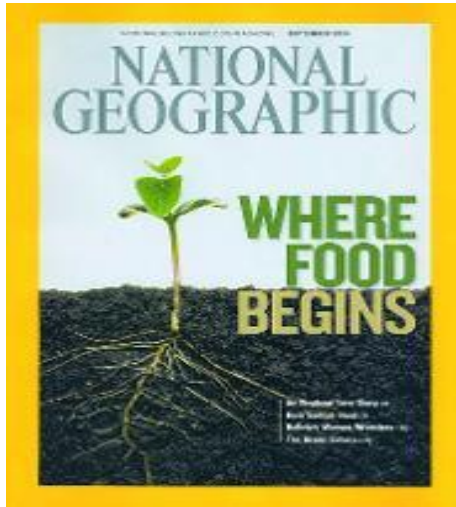
2.4 Combine with boolean to form a search expression

- **OR**: finds records that contain either or both of the words specified.
- Example: **online learning OR distance education** retrieves records that contain either online learning or distance education.

2.4 Combine with boolean to form a search expression

- **NOT**: finds records with the first of the two terms but not the second.
- Example: **online learning NOT distance education** retrieves records with online learning, but excludes those records containing distance education.

3. Identify information sources



Information sources

Books

Popular/Special
Interest Magazine

Websites

Academic Journals

Professional/Trade
Magazines

Newspapers

Books

Best For:

- Comprehensive information about the topic
- Background and historical information
- Bibliography of other sources

The Information:

- Often places an event into some sort of historical context
- Can provide broad overviews of an event
- Can be intended for a broad audience depending on the book, ranging from scholars to a general audience

Watch For:

- Dated information
- Content level can range from general public to expert
- Bias or slant (dependent on author)

Scholarly/Academic Journals

Best For:

- In depth information
- Articles written by experts
- Charts and graphs
- Recent research on a topic
- Bibliographies of other sources

The Information

- Is often theoretical, carefully analyzing the impact of an event on society, culture and public policy
- Is peer-reviewed
- Often narrow in topic
- Is intended for other scholars, researchers, professionals and university students in the field

Watch For:

- Terminology and depth of articles may be difficult to understand by novices
- Dated information (sort your results by date if you are looking for the most recent information, as some journals extend back several decades)

Examples

- Journal of Applied Economics
- Econometrica
- The Quarterly Journal of Economics
- The Historian
- Journal of the American Medical Association
- Lancet

Popular/Special Interest Magazine

Best For:

- Current information
- Shorter, easy to understand articles
- Photographs and illustrations

The Information:

- Is contained in long-form stories. Weekly magazines begin to discuss the impact of an event on society, culture and public policy
- Can include detailed analysis of events, interviews, as well as opinions and analysis
- Offers perspectives of an event from particular groups or geared toward specific audiences
- Is intended for a general audience or specific non-professional groups

Watch For:

- Authors are usually not experts
- Articles can lack depth
- Sources not always cited
- Editorial bias of a publication

Professional/Trade Magazines

Best For:

- Specialized information related to a particular discipline or profession
- Current information
- Some bibliographies

The Information:

- Is contained in long-form articles or reports
- May provide context and analysis of an event as it relates to a specific interest group
- Is intended for a professional organizations or groups with similar interests

Watch For:

- Article length can vary between short, easy to understand to lengthy and highly specific
- Sources not always cited
- Characteristics similar to both popular and scholarly sources sometimes make it difficult to recognize source type

Newspapers

Best For:

- Daily information
- Localized information and events
- Beginning to apply chronology to an event and explain why the event occurred

The Information

- May include statistics, photographs and editorial coverage
- Includes quotes from experts, government officials, witnesses, etc.
- Is intended for a general audience

Watch For:

- Authors usually not experts

Websites

Best For:

- Government information
- Varied points of view on a topic
- Statistics
- Company information

The Information:

- Is primarily provided through resources like Internet news sites when related to a specific event
- Explains the who, what, when and where of an event
- Is intended for a general audience

Watch For:

- Credibility and accuracy cannot be assured (check for author credentials, publication date, etc.)
- Information may be highly biased
- Sources not always cited

Resources for Economists on the Internet

- <http://www.lse.ac.uk/economics/siteMap/economicsResources.aspx>
- <http://www.rfe.org/>

Databases

What is an online database?

- Indexes of academic articles and other materials in specific fields
- Individual online periodicals (journals, magazines, or newspapers) or e-books
- Collections of online periodicals or e-books
- Archives of older journals, newspapers, or books which have been

What is an online database?

- Indexes or collections of dissertations, government documents, technical reports, standards, or other specialized content types
- Indexes or collections of statistical data, maps, images, music, video, or other non-text materials
- Citation indexes, which track who cited specific articles and books

scanned <http://guides.library.ucla.edu/databases>

Types of online databases

- There are two main types of database.
- 'Fulltext' databases provide the complete journal article to read online, while 'bibliographic' databases only provide references and abstracts (summaries).
- You can either search or browse both types of database.
- Politécnica subscribes to several online databases which you can find through Biblioteca.

Watch for:

- When you want to find articles on your topic in magazines, journals or newspapers

Why should I use an online database?

- You can use an online database to search for up-to-the-minute published material on the subject of your assignment.
- It is much easier to use an online database to search lots of journals simultaneously for articles on a topic than to search through journals individually.
- You can find thousands of references and articles from your PC.

Why should I use an online database?

- Material accessed through the University's subscribed databases tends to be more academically reliable than references discovered via Google.
- Knowing how to use online databases to locate relevant information is an important information skill.
- Developing such skills will not only help you with your studies but will also look good in your personal development profile.

Choose the right database(s)

- Learn about the major features of databases you should look for when selecting a
- What Subject Area(s) Does It Cover?
- What Types of Material Does It Cover?

Using Multidisciplinary Databases



EPN



www.epn.edu.ec

Biblioteca

5. Evaluating information

- It is important to critically evaluate the resources you consult during your research no matter what the format.
- Information needs to be checked for reliability and validity.
- You might wish to consider a number of criteria when evaluating these information sources:

5. Evaluating information: Authority

- Is the book publisher a university press or a major commercial publisher? Has the book been reviewed?
- Has the journal article been published in a peer-reviewed or scholarly journal or is was it published in a magazine?

5. Evaluating information: Accuracy

- ❑ Is it consistent with other accounts?
- ❑ Does it provide evidence and come to appropriate conclusions?
- ❑ Does the work provide citations?
- ❑ Does the author use sources accurately?
- ❑ Is the bibliography sufficient, consistent and appropriate?

5. Evaluating information: Currency and Purpose

- Is currency important to the topic?
- When was the information published?
- What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, persuade, report research or present opinion?
- Has there been any reaction to the author's argument?

5. Evaluating information: Coverage and Intended audience

- Is the information relevant to your topic?
- Is the information intended to be comprehensive or specialized?
- Who is the intended audience?

Evaluating journal articles

- <http://ip-science.thomsonreuters.com/mjl/>
- <http://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php>

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Resources for Economists on the Internet

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- <http://www.lse.ac.uk/economics/siteMap/economicsResources.aspx>
- <http://www.rfe.org/>

References

University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

<http://rmit.libguides.com/c.php?g=335973&p=2263995>

scanned<http://guides.library.ucla.edu/databases>