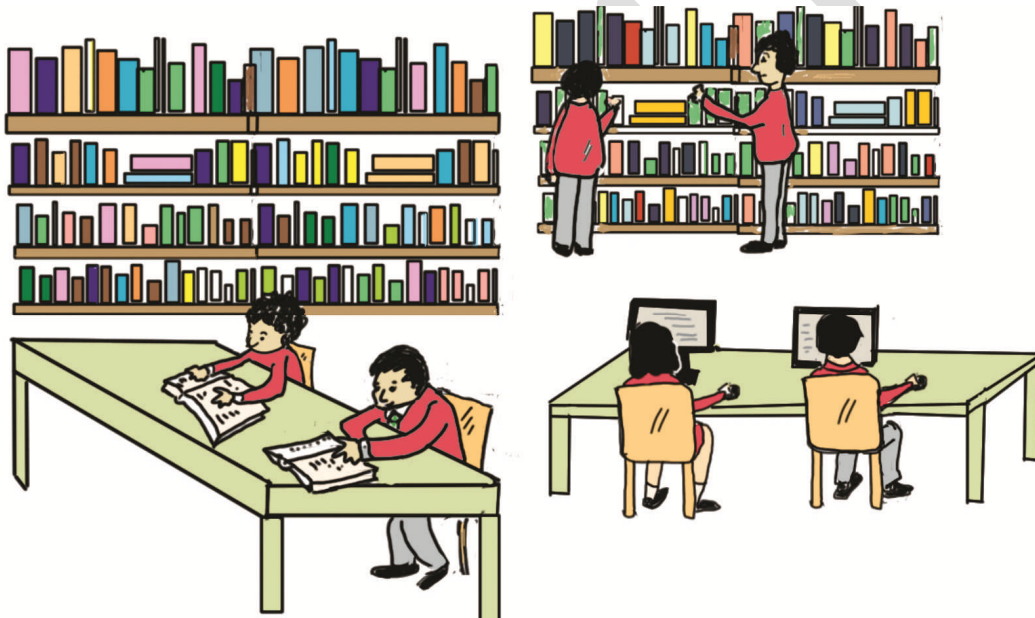**Enhanced Learning
Educational Services**

"the study skills specialist"

RESEARCH SKILLS

Many tasks and assignments in high school will require you to research a topic then report back on what you learn. Save time by learning to streamline your research and quickly locate the information you need.

- **You should read each point and highlight the key phrases in that point.**
- **Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.**
- **You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.**

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Enhanced Learning Educational Services Profile

Our Organisation:
Enhanced Learning Educational Services (ELES) is the leading provider of study skills resources in Australia. Since 2001 over 500,000 students across Australia have benefited from our study skills worksheets and workbooks. An Australian business based in Sydney, our clients extend throughout Australia and to international schools overseas. We are committed to helping all students improve their ability to learn and study by providing study skills seminars and resources on the topics students need.

Our Mission:
To provide a worthwhile and effective service to teachers, students and parents, enhancing students' learning skills and abilities through dynamic programs, resources and strategies to unlock the power of the mind and enable greater success at school and in life.

Our Commitment:
As part of ELES' commitment to education, 5% of all gross income is donated to charities that help and assist children.

For further information about ELES or our products or contact details:

info@enhanced-learning.net
www.enhanced-learning.net

1. TAKE THE TIME TO ANALYSE THE TASK
BEFORE YOU START YOUR RESEARCH

Take the time to analyse the task and ensure you are clear on all aspects of the requirements.

- Do I understand the key words and language of the task?
- Am I clear on the objectives of the task?
- Do I know the marking or assessment criteria?
- Can I express the requirements of the task in my own words?
- What are my initial thoughts or ideas about the task?
- What do I already know about the subject matter?
- What ways could I approach this task?
- Who could I discuss my ideas with?
- Do I need to clarify any aspect of the task?
- What sources could I use to investigate further?

> **DISCUSS**
> *a. How long do you usually spend ensuring you are clear about what you have to do for the task? Do you ask for help early on if you need to?*

2. CHOOSE YOUR RESEARCH APPROACH

OUTLINE APPROACH	BIG PICTURE APPROACH
The outline approach is where you already have a bit of an idea about what you will write about: so you first decide an outline of what you will cover in your task, then research each aspect of your outline, so you can write each section. *"write an outline and write to the outline"*	The big picture approach is where you aren't sure what to include or what to write about in your assignment or essay: so you start researching and as you research you then start to develop a plan of what you will write about. *"research and write lots and then cut back"*
READING: Do some background reading to clarify the content you will include.	**READ WIDELY:** Read widely and take notes as you read, detailing the sources. Cast a wide net.
OUTLINE: Create an outline of the structure your research will follow. This gives you a clear path to follow in your writing.	**DEVELOP PLAN:** Let your plan and structure develop from brainstorming, mind maps, and by reviewing the information you have collected.
REVIEW: Review the resources in a methodical way, making notes carefully as per your outline and clearly detailing the sources.	**INVESTIGATE:** Let one reading lead to another. Make notes on what you are reading so you can come back to it again if you need to.
ANALYSE: Analyse the information as you go and write the draft of your essay or assignment as you research that section.	**STRUCTURE:** Once you have completed all your research, then develop a cohesive structure and outline from which to write.

DISCUSS

b. Do you prefer the outline approach or big picture approach? Why? Does it vary with different tasks or subjects?

3. FINDING RESOURCES

- Try to use as many different types of sources as you can, including books, magazine articles, journals and Internet articles. Don't rely on just one source (like the Internet) for all your information.

- Keep a list of all the sources that you use. Include the title of the source, the author, page numbers, the publisher, and place and date of publication. This is your preliminary, or draft, bibliography.

Source	Primary Attribute	Advantage	Disadvantage
Books Texts	Comprehensive	Substantive	Information may be out of date, depending on the date of the book's publication.
Magazines Periodicals	Popular	Focused	Because of a limited amount of space, coverage is limited to only most current information.
Journal	Scholarly	Authoritative	Because of a limited amount of space, coverage is limited to only most current information.
Newspaper	Current	Broad in scope	Non-substantive
Internet	Accessible	Broad in scope	Possibly unreliable

USING LIBRARIES

NOTE: Unfortunately many students now go straight to the Internet and by-pass libraries altogether. Don't neglect your school library. If you give it a chance you'll be pleasantly surprised by what you will find there. Plus it is usually quicker than wading through the masses of unrelated information on the Net.
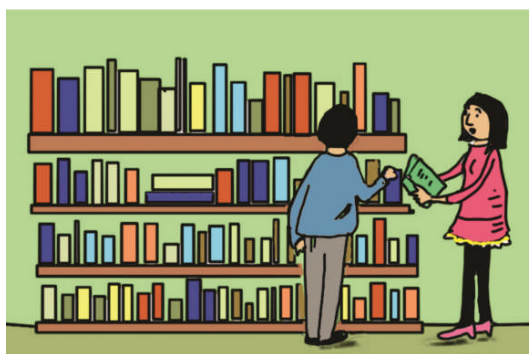
- **ASK THE LIBRARIAN:** Explore the resources available in your school or local public library. If you don't understand how to use a library, get a few of you together and ask your school librarian to give you a 5-10 minute rundown about the catalogue and the Dewey decimal system.

- **USE CATALOGUES:** Use the electronic catalogue or browse the library shelves to look for books on your topic. The more you can use relevant search terms and define your subject the more focused your list of resources will be.

- **CHECK BIBLIOGRAPHIES:** If you find a book that is useful, check the bibliography (list of sources) in the back of that book for other books or articles on that topic. By using this

technique of routinely following up on sources cited in bibliographies, you can generate a surprisingly large number of books and articles on your topic in a relatively short time.

- **CHECK INDEXES:** Also check indexes of periodicals, newspapers and journals (journals are used by academics to write papers about their research and ideas and therefore contain up-to-date information about topics).

- **DATABASES:** Ask your librarian to point you towards government databases and sources of statistical information, e.g. census information.

DISCUSS	*c. When you do research, do you use other sources apart from the Internet?* *If yes, what sources, if no, why not?*

INTERNET SEARCH TIPS

- If you learn to search more effectively, you will find more targeted results.
  EXACT PHRASES: Enclose "exact phrases" in quotation marks.

- **SIMPLE:** Try to keep your search statements simple.

- **COMMON WORDS:** Leave out common words, such as "the", "in" and "at".

- **SPECIFIC:** If you need to search on a single term, make the term as specific and precise as possible.

- **ALTERNATIVE TERMS:** Carefully choose your keywords, and remember to think about alternative terms that could be used e.g. "Australian mammals" or "marsupials".

- **HELP PAGES:** You can find specific help on how to search effectively from the individual search engine homepages. Look for help files, information pages, FAQs and guides to searching.

- **SEARCH IN TITLE FIELD:** A single term limited to the TITLE of a page, rather than ANYWHERE ON A PAGE, is more likely to result in relevant material. Click on 'Advanced Search' to select this option. For Google you access 'Advanced Search' from the 'Settings' link at the bottom of the Google search page.

- **DOMAINS:** Use domains to limit your search to material to information from a particular country only, e.g. for Australian results search for .au sites. You can also select this option in the 'Advanced Settings'.
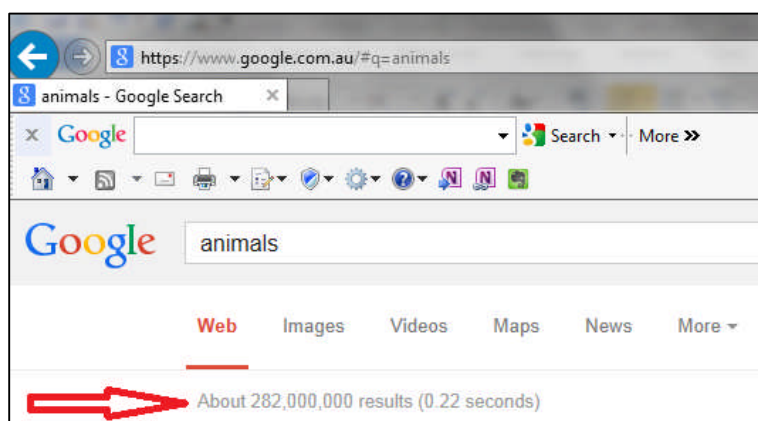
- **VARIATIONS:** Many search tools look for word variations, including single and plural terms e.g. Australia will match to Australian, Australia's, Australians etc.

- **MULTIPLE SEARCH ENGINES:** Always try more than one search engine. (You may like to try: www.studysearch.com)

- **BOOLEAN OPERATORS:** Use Advanced Search features to limit your search using special words such as AND, OR, NOT. For example "animals" and "Australian".

- **WARNING:** These days anyone can create a website! You have to be particularly careful about using information you have found on the Internet. The next section examines this issue.

DISCUSS | *d. Have you ever tried to learn more about how to search effectively on the Internet? Which of these tips did you know or have you tried?*

HOW RELIABLE IS WIKIPEDIA?

It is as reliable as the people who have contributed to the content!

- In the Schools FAQs section on Wikipedia, Wikipedia states that students should NOT use Wikipedia for school tasks without checking external sources that contributors have cited and by verifying it somewhere else (that does not rely on Wikipedia).

- Wikipedia also admits that it is open to vandalism and at any time it certainly contains some inaccurate information.

- Just remember, anyone can contribute and some people will add incorrect or misleading information.

- However, Wikipedia is great to get an overview or the big picture about whatever you are researching. It is a good way to help yourself understand what you are researching. It helps you work out where to start and what to look for. Wikipedia is great to give you ideas of what related areas to research, or useful key words for internet searches.

- Many schools do not let you list Wikipedia as a reference in your bibliography. This means that even if the information was correct in Wikipedia, you still have to locate that same information somewhere else so that you can include it in your assignment and bibliography.

DISCUSS | *e. What has been your experience with Wikipedia? What do you use it for? Have you ever encountered any problems?*