

INTO»

MANCHESTER

Learning Centre,
Guide 17

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Finding The *BEST* Information for Your Studies



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What sources of information should you use for your assignments?

- Do **NOT** just use Google and accept the results you find!
- Do **NOT** use Wikipedia as the main source of your information for your studies; you can use it to get an understanding/ overview of the subject but use it **carefully** and check the source of the information that Wikipedia gives.
- **You should make use of information that you can trust– that is, information that is reliable and truthful**

How do you make sure that you can trust information you have found?

Whether you are using a book, newspaper, magazine or website, **you need to follow the CRAAP test!** Check the following:

Always ask
for help if
you are stuck!

- **How old is the book/ website? (Currency)**

You usually need up-to-date information unless it is a classic book on a subject or historical analysis of a topic. Is the date of the work acceptable for your needs?

- **Is the information suitable for your work (Relevancy)**

Hopefully, you have now found information you can trust, but you also have to ask yourself: is the information **relevant**? Is it at the right-level for your needs? Is it at professor-level (**too hard**) or at child-level (**too easy**) Is the information what you need to make your project stronger

Does the information found actually match your topic? For example, if you have been asked to find information about adults, is it **RELEVANT** to be reading information about children? Or if you have been asked for information about Britain, is it **RELEVANT** to be reading information about China or Russia?

- **Is there any evidence? (Accuracy)**

Is the information from a reliable source?

Look at the information you have found – think of it as a Court of Law! Has the author offered any **PROOF** for what they are saying?

CHECK: are there any references so you know what the information is based on? Does the piece of work include a reading list or bibliography? Throughout the article, does the writer tell you what works were used to support any findings?

Has the information been “peer-reviewed”? This means the work has been read and judged by other experts to be a valid piece of work. ***At University level, you should only be using academic articles that have been scholarly peer-reviewed***

- **Who wrote the information? (Authority)**

Who is the writer or publisher do you trust them?

Does the writer have good subject knowledge?

For example are they a University professor, teacher, politician, business person, writing about a topic in their subject area?

For books, check the back of the book– is there any information there about the author?

Check also:

Who is the publisher?

(a publisher is a company or person that prepares and issues books, or journals for sale)

Is the publisher a well-known or respected publisher? (for example, a University publisher such as Manchester University Press, or Oxford University Press.)

Other examples of publishers include: Macmillan, Hodder, Pearson's, Penguin, Longmans). Is the publisher a member of the Publishers Association? (<http://www.publishers.org.uk/>)

Check that the publisher's name is not the same as the author's. This is often a sign that no one else would produce the book and is called ***“vanity publishing”***.

For websites: look at the URL to see if it from a source you trust:

Check its web address or URL for clues.

For example: **.ac** or **.edu** at the end of a URL shows that it is a website from an educational institution

.gov at the end of a URL shows that it is a website from a governmental institution

.org at the end of a URL shows that it is a website from a not-for-profit organisation or charity

co. or **.com** or **.net** Can be anything! So you are advised to “Google” the website to see if it has been reported as a fake.

Why have they written it? (Purpose)

Is the information produced by an organisation who is trying to sell you something? Are they trying to get you to believe in a particular viewpoint? (so the information may be biased) What is their “agenda”?



Always check the website address/ URL carefully. Is it an academic website or a hoax one?

Think about:

What “style” is the information written in?

Is the language emotive? For example, with newspapers, **tabloid newspapers** often use sensational language, usually about celebrities and sport, often poorly written and with a lack of detail. Examples of tabloids include: *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *the Metro*, *The Sun*. Try and use “**broadsheet**” **newspapers** that use professional journalists and work within professional guidelines. Examples of broadsheets include *The Guardian*, *The Independent* (now online only) and *The Times*

Has the information been written as a joke/ hoax/ or to steal money? This can be particularly true of websites as:

- anyone can set up a website
- many websites offer no evidence for facts and views
- some websites are hoaxes or fiction. For example, see <http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

Make life easy for yourself: 4 simple steps

Step 1) Use the special academic databases bought by INTO Manchester!

These special databases cover information **written with authority** by academics, specialists and experts.

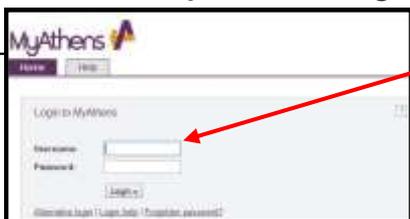
All INTO Manchester electronic resources are accessed using the

Open Athens link on our website

<http://intolearningcentre.co.uk/online>

resources/

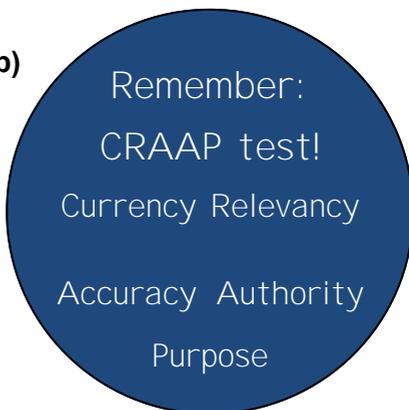
Click on the OpenAthens logo



Use your **OpenAthens Username** and **Password** to log in. *If you do not have a username/ password, come into the Learning Centre and ask staff*

You can pick up guides online and from the Learning Centre to use these INTO Manchester databases effectively and efficiently; databases include:

- **Ebsco Databases** (Guide 7a and 7b)
- **The Reviews** (Simple Guides 11 – 16)
- **E-Books** (Simple Guide 17 & 18)
- **Issues Online** (Simple Guide 19)



Step 2) Use high-quality websites only

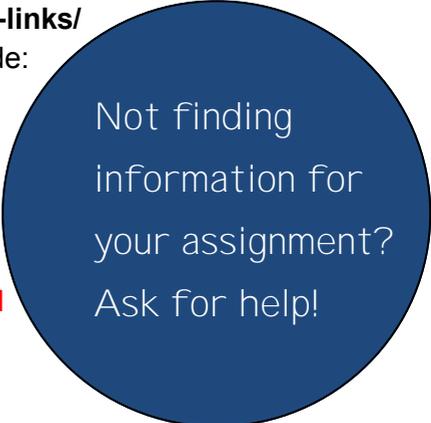
As a minimum, when searching the web, you should be making use of search engines such as **Google Scholar** (<http://scholar.google.co.uk/>) rather than Google itself so you know you will find some “scholarly”/ academic literature. It is also recommended that you make use of “**Open Access Gateways**” that contain web resources that have been quality checked by subject experts. Below are some gateways you might find of use for your research:

- **CORE (COncecting REpositories)** Free access to millions of open access research papers <https://core.ac.uk/search/>
- **Digital Commons Network** Brings together free, full-text scholarly articles from hundreds of universities and colleges worldwide <http://network.bepress.com/>
- **Directory of Open Access Journals** Gives access to some very useful “peer reviewed” journals for you to use. This means that articles have been checked by fellow experts. Suitable for those carrying out in-depth research <https://www.doaj.org/> (**Also available via Ebsco Discovery**)
- **JURN** Finds content in over 4,000 FREE ‘open access’ ejournals in the arts and humanities. Provides a useful list of the journals included <http://www.jurn.org/>

Step 3) Pick up the guides with websites that have already been checked

All guides are available online at <https://intolearningcentre.co.uk/useful-links/> and in the Learning Centre. Guides include:

- Finding Company Information (Guide 18)**
- Finding Information on Politics (Guide 19)**
- Finding Information on Economics and Business (Guide 20)**
- Finding Information on Accounting and Finance (Guide 21)**
- Finding Information on the Sciences (Guide 22)**



Not finding
information for
your assignment?
Ask for help!

Finding Information on Marketing (Guide 23)
Finding Information on Management & Organisational Behaviour (Guide 24)
Finding Information on Mathematics (Guide 32)

Want more practice on working out if you can trust the information you find? Be like a detective and take the Sherlock Challenge!



Go to **Skills for Success** in VLE/ Moodle (go to Learning Centre website at <http://intolearningcentre.co.uk/> and click Moodle link) You should already be enrolled in the Skills for Success module

Look for **Be like a Detective: you can be Sherlock!**

Step 4) Learn how to search effectively

A) Searching the web: many students type in long sentences when searching the Internet. This means bits of the search will be picked up separately and you will get 1, 000s of hits that are not exactly what you want.

To search more effectively use **Boolean Searching**. This is a way of making your searches more exact with fewer hits. For example:

Use “ ” around a **phrase** and it will search for all the words in that phrase

Use + to **link two phrases** together

Use – to search for one phrase but deliberately **miss out** the other one.

B) Searching in the Library

All libraries (including INTO Manchester, the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester Central Library have a library catalogue available online, listing all the books they have. INTO Manchester Library Catalogue is found at: <https://intolearningcentre.co.uk/library/>

Each book has a number (**Dewey number**) which tells you where it is in the library. Dewey numbers are also called **class numbers** or **shelfmarks**.

Checklist to help you find the book/s you want:

- Make a note of the **shelfmark (class number/ Dewey number)** number from the catalogue
- Check how many copies are available on the catalogue
- Is the book/s on loan to somebody else?
- Is the book/s a reference copy? (***this means you cannot take it out of the library***)
- Is the book/s an e-book (electronic book)? This means it will not be on the shelf and you need to go online to read it.

You will soon get to know the Dewey numbers of the subjects you are studying. The main numbers are given below:

Main Dewey Subject Numbers

000 Computer Science, Information and General Works

100 Philosophy and Psychology

200 Religion

300 Social Sciences. **Includes 320 Politics, 330 Economics**

400 Language. **Includes 428.24 Studying English**

500 Science. **Includes 530 Physics, 540 Chemistry, 574 Biology
510 Mathematics**

600 Technology. **Includes 650 Business, 658 Management**

700 Art and Recreation. **Includes 746.92 Design**

800 Literature

900 History and Geography

