



# Using sources

A guide for students: Find it - Check it - Credit it



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# Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

In many subjects internally assessed work (coursework or controlled assessment) such as essays, investigations, projects or performance work will count towards your final grade.

A source is any resource that you use to collect information for your coursework including text books, encyclopaedias, journals, TV and radio programmes, the internet and other people.

An acknowledgment is a description of a source so that someone else can find it, along with an indication in your coursework of which information came from that source.

Coursework for controlled assessment often involves researching information from sources such as text books, encyclopaedias, journals, TV and radio programmes and the internet. Any work you submit for assessment must be your own work and you should list (acknowledge) any sources you use. Failure to acknowledge your sources could constitute malpractice and you may be penalised.

This guide provides useful, practical advice on how to use and acknowledge sources of information when you are researching coursework for controlled assessment, so you can demonstrate your knowledge to your teachers without being accused of plagiarism.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) defines plagiarism as:

Unacknowledged copying from published sources (including the Internet) or incomplete referencing (JCQ, 2008, p28)

This guide covers the following areas:

- finding, checking and using electronic resources
- referencing sources and using citations
- paraphrasing.



# Find it!

Finding poor quality information online is easy. Finding good quality information is slightly harder!

## The internet is vast

You probably use the web for:

- music
- games
- talking to friends.

Did you know that it is also an excellent resource for:

- assignments
- school projects?

## Points to remember

- anyone can publish online
- sources may be untrue
- sources may be inaccurate
- always check the relevance
- always check the reliability
- be critical of all content.

Ask your teacher or school librarian for help if you're not sure.

## Using Wikipedia as a starting point

*'The free encyclopedia [sic] that anyone can edit.'*  
(Wikipedia, 2009)

Wikipedia can be an excellent starting point for research. However, unlike traditional encyclopaedias anyone can add information on any topic, even you! It may not necessarily be authoritative or accurate. In some cases information may be completely untrue.

## You must always check the facts in a wiki article

- check the reference list for the article.
- carry out further research to find the referenced articles.
- use the history and discussion pages accompanying an entry to help evaluate whether you can trust the information.
- you can find a pre-checked Wikipedia collection of 5,500 articles targeted around the national curriculum at <http://schools-wikipedia.org>.
- never use Wikipedia as your only source.



## Using search engines as a starting point

Google or Yahoo! can be a good starting point for your research.

- first write a list of keywords or search terms.
- use a thesaurus to help create synonyms.
- target the search using the search engine's advanced options.
- enclosing specific phrases in quotation marks will result in a more accurate search (for example "global warming").
- read Google's list of suggestions for more effective searching at *Google search basics* (Google, 2009).

## Using a database as a starting point

Your school library will probably subscribe to online databases that you can also use to locate information on a topic, such as Encyclopaedia Britannica or NewsUK. The advantage of using these databases is that the information they provide has been written and reviewed by experts.



## What about images?

You may decide to include images to enhance your work. It's important to remember that any images you find on the web (for example using an images search in Google) belong to someone and may be subject to copyright restrictions.

It's not always instantly obvious where the image has come from and who it belongs to, so it's best to click on the image itself to find out more information and whether you can use it in your work. In most cases these images will be subject to copyright and you will need to ask the owner for permission to use them and may, in some cases, need to buy them first.

You can find collections of freely available images on the web, which offer high quality images that are not subject to copyright restrictions.

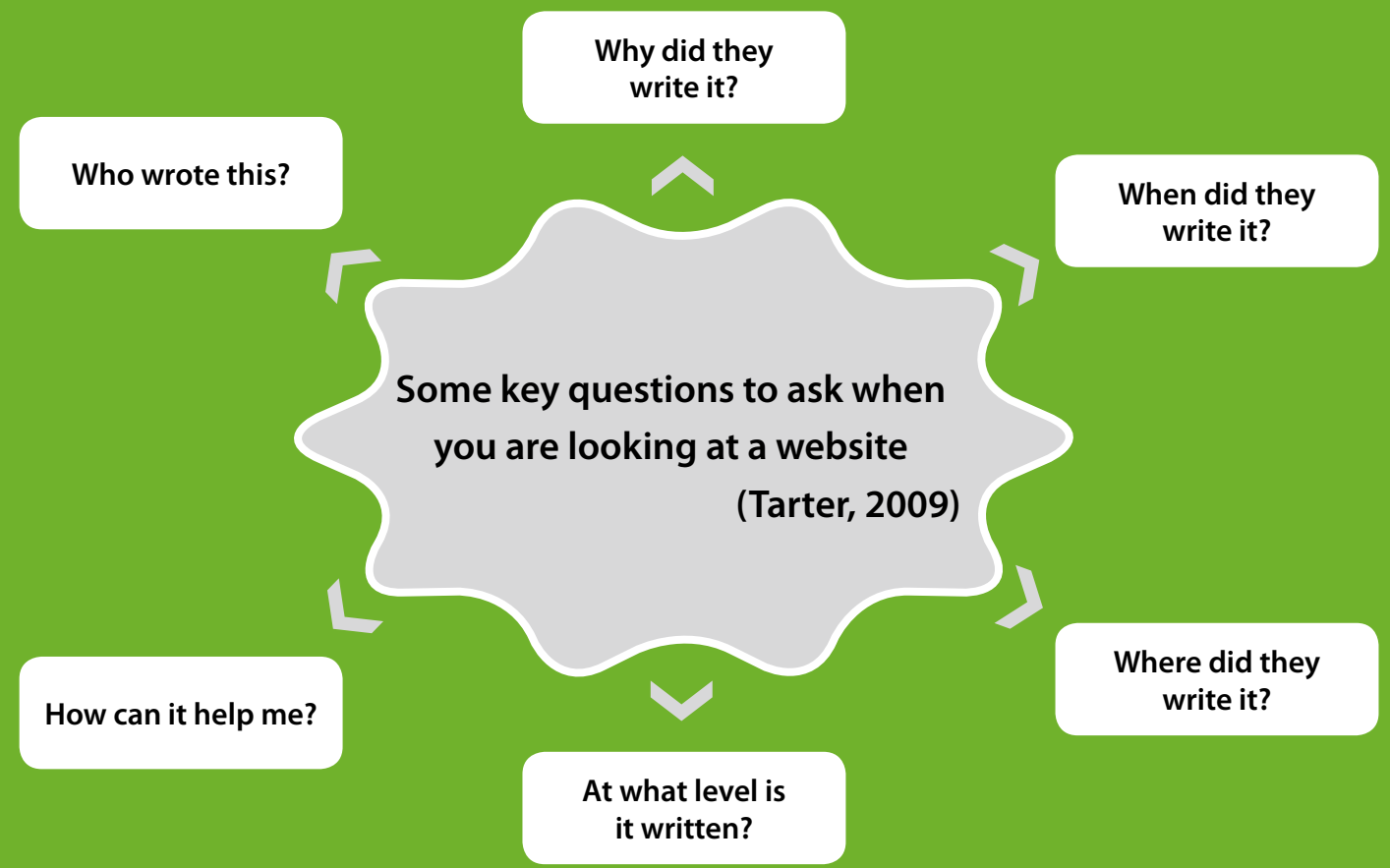
You can find further details on using images in your work, along with sources of free images, in a useful tutorial developed by JISC Digital Media ([www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/imagesearching](http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/imagesearching)).

Remember you need to reference any images you use in your work.



# Check it!

How can I check the accuracy and reliability of the websites I use?



## Put your sources under the spotlight – be aware of bias

Consider why a particular person or organisation is writing on this topic. Do they have something to gain? Be aware that what they write and the way in which they write may not be impartial.

For example:

if you are looking for information about global warming each of the following authors will offer a very different viewpoint:

- a leading scientific research council
- a personal blog from a climate change protestor
- a company offering carbon neutral flights.

If you struggle to find the answers to the questions in the diagram then this particular website may not be the best one to use for your research.

## Further information

The Internet Detective ([www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective](http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective)) tutorial is an excellent tool to help with evaluating information provided on websites.

## Use trusted sites

Using sources of information whose reputation you can trust, and where an expert has provided the details, is another way of assuring authoritative and accurate information on a topic.

For example:

- the BBC for news
- the Met Office for the weather
- Hansard for parliamentary proceedings
- resources that your teacher or librarian provide.





# Credit it! A quick guide to referencing

## Every idea has an owner – give them credit

- every article has an author (or authors) who has spent time creating and researching the topic.
- you can't use the author's work or ideas, including images, without giving them credit.
- don't just cut and paste.

## Let your teacher know your sources

By giving credit and clearly indicating that you are incorporating someone else's ideas in your own work you show your teacher that you have researched the topic properly using authoritative sources.

If you use someone else's ideas in your work without giving them credit for the original, this is plagiarism (trying to pass someone else's work off as your own). If this work is submitted for your qualification this constitutes malpractice and you will be penalised, which could result in disqualification from the examination or examination series.

## Enable someone else to find your sources

You give credit or acknowledge the sources you have used by adding a set of references to your work.

Ideally when you provide a reference to a source, whether it is a website or a printed text, you should give enough information about the source so that others, in particular your assessor (teacher or the examiner), can find it easily.

## How do I give credit?

There are a number of standard ways to acknowledge the work of others. The following examples use the Harvard standard (also known as the author-date system) as defined in *Cite them right* (Pears and Shields, 2008), which is widely used in universities, colleges and schools. *Document it* (www.documentit.co.uk), an electronic tool developed specifically for students based on the Harvard standard, helps you manage your citations.

Citation methods may seem complicated but it is extremely important to acknowledge all your sources, otherwise although you did not intend to cheat you may be accused of plagiarism.

Every time you use an idea or include material from another author you should also include a reference to the source, both in the text of your work and at the end in a reference list or bibliography. See ❶ in the example of where to use the reference "(Crystal, 2006, p29)".

**My Great Essay**  
By Adam Smith

I read a lot about writing and vocabulary and found this quotation very useful.

"Learning vocabulary is always a matter of building up fields of words. And we do that by comparing words with other words. That is how parents teach children."  
(Crystal, 2006, p29)

In conclusion I think I learned a lot from this book and from my parents.

**References**  
Crystal, D (2006) *Words words words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Bibliography**  
Murray, W (2008) *All about essays*, Newcastle: nlearning Press  
Dawes, J and Rowley, J (1998) 'Enhancing the customer experience: contributions from information technology', *Management Decision*, 36:6, pp.350-357.

❷

❸

In the body of the text you only include the author's last name, year and optionally the page number you are referring to ❶. You give the full bibliographic reference ❷ at the end of your work in the references section.

You should include any source used as background reading ❸ in a 'Bibliography' section.

You should use in-text citations whenever you use a source in your work:

- as a specific reference to information or facts from the source
- as a direct quotation (the same words as the original)
- in a paraphrase (a rewording of the original).

❶

Your reference list and bibliography are always presented in alphabetical order by author, last name. There is no need to divide your bibliography up into, say, a textbook section and an internet section. Simply go by the author's last name. If you do not know the author, or it is not given, you should use the name of the organisation that created the material instead.



### Bibliographic information

Different sources require you to record different information in your bibliography and references section. We provide details of what to record for three main formats below:

- textbooks
- journal articles
- websites (and images from the web).

The following formats are taken from *Cite them right* (Pears and Shields, 2008).

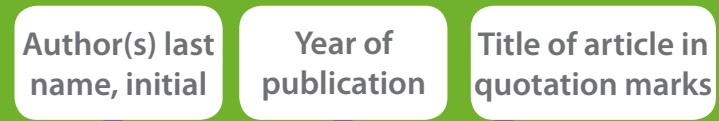
### Bibliography information for a textbook



Crystal, D (2006) *Words words words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.



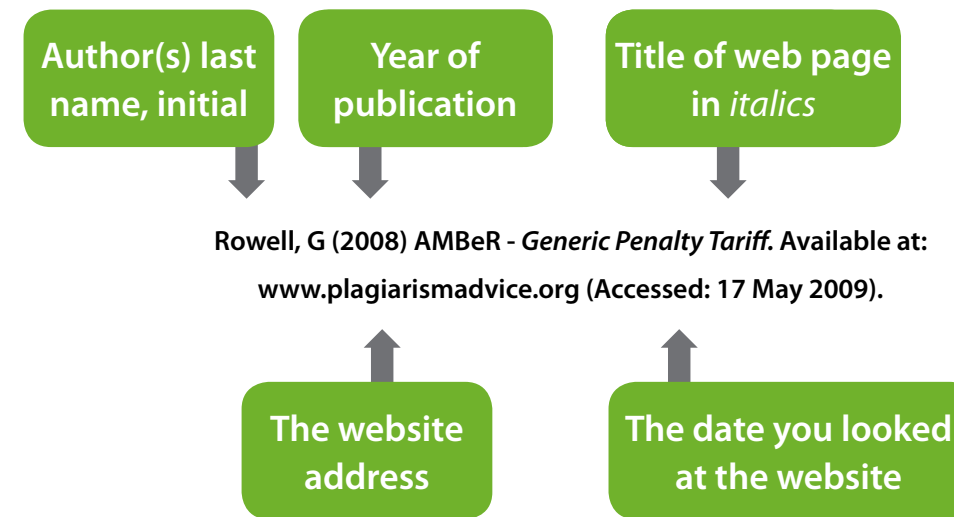
### Bibliography information for a journal article



Dawes, J and Rowley, J (1998) 'Enhancing the customer experience: contributions from the information technology', *Management Decision*, 36:6, pp. 350-357.



### Bibliography information for a website (or online image\*)



\* In the case of an online image 'author' would refer to the photographer or illustrator.



### Quotations

If you want to include a quotation from another source then you can use the following format:

**As Crystal (2006) points out “Learning vocabulary is always a matter of building up fields of words.”**

If the words that you want to quote are longer than a sentence you need to include the author’s name, the date of publication and the page number the quotation comes from, at the end.

As Crystal (2006) points out:  
**Learning vocabulary is always a matter of building up fields of words. And we do that by comparing words with other words. That is how parents teach children.**  
(Crystal, 2006, p29)

Here you indent the actual words so they stand out, and you don’t need to place them in quotation marks.

### Journal article

A journal article has exactly the same format in the body of the text:

Cook (2008) points out the benefits to students of undertaking research within a classroom environment:  
**After the experience, students reported a significant increase in their understanding of the research process. In addition, students recommended using the exercise in future classes and at other universities.**  
(Cook, 2008, p13)

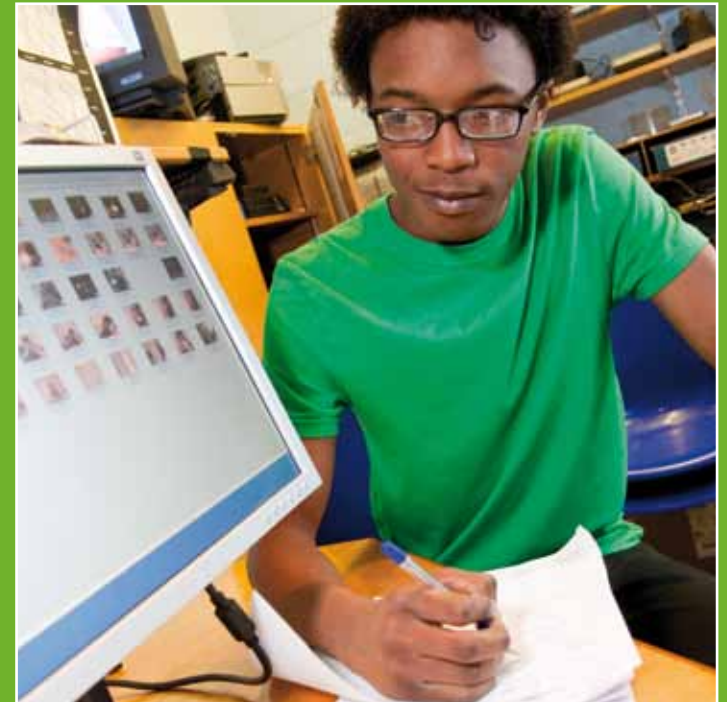
### Websites

Main body quotations take a similar form. The idea is that the reader will find the URL (web address) in the reference list if they wish to check the quotation.

Harris (2008) is keen to share his expertise with all sectors:  
**New right now is a page of software tools that trainers, educators, and instructional designers will find very useful.**  
(Harris, 2008, Virtual Salt)

### Referencing other sources

Should you find that you want to include references from sources other than those listed then your teacher or school librarian should be able to help you with how to format and include them.





## Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is something that you will have been asked to do throughout your school life. This is when your teachers ask you to put someone else's ideas into your own words. Paraphrasing is a skill that may take time to master. If you paraphrase the ideas of someone else, rather than quoting them directly, you will still need to acknowledge the original author. As with a direct quotation you must include the author's last name, followed by the year of publication.

Crystal (2006) points out that...

Harris (2008) has produced an online document that...

Dawes and Rowley (1998) define....

This will allow the reader to find the full bibliographic reference at the end of your work.

## Paraphrasing example

**Original text (written by Mr Brown):** The green fields of Lincolnshire are at their best in high summer.

### Bad paraphrase:

The verdant meadows of Lincoln are in their prime in August.

**Why?** Here the writer has simply replaced some of the words with synonyms.

### Good paraphrase:

According to Brown, the countryside of Lincolnshire is beautiful between June and August.

**Why?** Rather than only changing a few words the writer has changed the structure, hinting at a more in depth understanding of the original. The writer has also acknowledged the original source.

## So, how do I paraphrase?

There are several methods you can adopt. Try them all a few times. You'll soon find out which ones work best for you.

1. Read small sections of your notes or the text you are studying (say a paragraph at a time). Cover your notes and then write the section in your own words.
2. For every sentence of text you want to paraphrase write two of your own. Remember it often helps if you identify the main idea then give an example of your own and then explain how your example fits with the main idea.
3. Take a small section (again say a paragraph). Write down the key words. Cover the original and then use the key words to help you write a paragraph in your own words. Don't change any technical words, numbers or mathematical or scientific formulae. However feel free to change the everyday words (see the example on paraphrasing) to those of your own.
4. Remember to include a reference to the person who first wrote what you have paraphrased.

## I've tried, but it doesn't work!

If you can't paraphrase the source then you may need to think about putting the idea in as a quotation.



## References

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## Further information

The following organisations also provide guidance on using sources and avoiding plagiarism:

- Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ): [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk)  
The JCQ represents the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK, including the GCSE and A level awarding organisations. JCQ coordinates common administration of qualifications between the organisations.
- JISC: [www.jisc.ac.uk](http://www.jisc.ac.uk)  
JISC inspires UK colleges and universities in the innovative use of digital technologies, helping to maintain the UK's position as a global leader in education.
- The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual): [www.ofqual.gov.uk](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk)  
The regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland.
- PlagiarismAdvice.org: [www.plagiarismadvice.org](http://www.plagiarismadvice.org)  
PlagiarismAdvice.org provides details of news, events, resources and research for teachers and students on plagiarism and ensuring work is authentic.

You can contact us at:

**The Office of Qualifications  
and Examinations Regulation**

Spring Place  
Coventry Business Park  
Herald Avenue  
Coventry CV5 6UB

2nd Floor  
Glendinning House  
6 Murray Street  
Belfast BT1 6DN

Switchboard: 0300 303 3344  
*(Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm)*  
Helpline: 0300 303 3346  
*(Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm)*  
Textphone: 0300 303 3345  
Fax: 0300 303 3348  
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