

How to Find, Evaluate and Use Information

PLAN

CHOOSE and DEFINE your topic
"Are self-driving cars the future of transportation?"

Test your topic to see if there is enough material available - if not, redefine your topic or pick a new one.

Yes, there is a lot of information - this topic will work.

Decide HOW MUCH and WHAT TYPE of information is needed (length, charts, statistics...)
1,000 words. Picture of car interior. Will want graphs showing sales trends and safety data. Will write paper and give presentation with visual aids.

Identify key words

- self-driving
- driverless
- autonomous

FIND

Library catalogs, eResources
Catalog search using keywords: 37 hits
eResources: Press Reader, Consumer Reports
Discovery: academic and other public library catalogs

Government and associations
Senate Committee report: "The Future of Automated Vehicles in Canada" Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators: White Paper – "Automated Vehicles in Canada" Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems

Search engines - (Google it)
"Self-driving cars may not reduce as many crashes as you think"
"U of T-Waterloo research data to put self-driving cars to ultimate test"
"The Future of Self Driving Cars in Canada"

First-person experts

Youtube: Elon Musk current opinion on Autonomous Driving and AI - June 13, 2019

EVALUATE

Is the information CURRENT?
For such a current topic, information is constantly being updated – try to use resources from the most recent 2-3 years. For a more historical topic (ie. confederation), older materials would still be useful.

Is it RELEVANT to your theme?
Since we are interested in the future, we would ignore the history of the technology and focus on driving trends in society and changing regulatory frameworks around the technology.

Is the source AUTHORITATIVE and ACCURATE?
Does your material have robust citations?
Does it support information you have found elsewhere?

What is the PURPOSE of the published information?

Is the article an opinion piece such as an editorial column or a blog where there might be individual bias, or is it a statistical report providing strictly data?

USE

Read and take notes
Be organized - label a notebook page with your source information and write down the page number used for each point you take notes about so you can always refer back to the source later.

Synthesize and write

- Create an outline.
- Read all your materials before you begin to write.
- Do follow-up research on points requiring more information

Use your own words and edit until you have a coherent story with a conclusion.

- Do not plagiarize
- Have someone else review your work

Cite your sources

There are three major citation styles:

- Modern Language Association (MLA)
- American Psychological Association (APA)
- Chicago Manual of Style