



Campus Academic Resource Program

Keeping Track of Sources

To make the researching process organized and save yourself a few headaches, keep accurate records and notes as you do your research. Create a system using a research journal, index cards, and/or computer files to keep track of the research you do and organize the information in a manageable way. This can save you time and energy as you write your paper and create a bibliography or list of references.

How to stay organized

- **Keep a research journal.** Since you'll probably be conducting research over a stretch of several days or weeks, keeping track of your findings in a journal will help you stay organized and will eliminate having to do extra work backtracking or reaching the same dead ends over and over again. For web research, write down what search engines and search terms you used and what useful websites you found. Don't forget the URL and date you accessed it. Also write down what relevance the website has to your research. This will help you stay on track and not waste too much time on interesting yet irrelevant sources.
- **Use index cards.** Index cards are handy for keeping sources organized. On one side, you can record bibliographic information. On the other side, take notes about the source, such as helpful pages or what relevance the source has to your research topic.
- **Stay electronically organized.** When doing research on an online catalog or database (such as Investigator or Academic Search Elite), use the "Mark Record" feature to email or keep track of sources you find. Keep a folder on your computer, floppy disk, flash drive, or email specifically for sources you find this way. This will make finding the sources and putting together a bibliography easier.



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Template for Recording Sources: Online and Electronic Sources

Author(s) or editor(s): last name, first name _____
Title and subtitle _____
Publication information (place, date, publishing company) _____
Date of access (when you found the material) _____
Name of website, homepage, online journal, or database where article was found (e.g., <i>InfoTrac</i> , <i>New York Times On the Web</i>) _____
URL of website, online journal, or database _____
If on online database, access number _____
For a periodical: volume and issue number, page numbers _____
For an article in a book: title of book, name of editor, page numbers _____ _____
Number of pages or paragraphs (if given) or sections with headings _____
If discussion list or forum, name of list or forum (e.g., Usenet, listserv name) _____
Sponsor of website or subscription service (e.g., university, govt. dept. or institution) _____
If online source with no print version, date of publication or posting _____
Keywords or Subjects used for search _____

Tips for Recording Source Information

- Familiarize yourself with the basics of the documentation style that you are using so that you know what you need to record. For example, APA doesn't require a URL for internet articles based on a print source, but MLA does. Also, record any information that might not be necessary for a bibliography, but that you might need in case you want to find the source again later on (e.g. library call numbers or database access numbers).
- Try to record all of the information you will need for your bibliography. At the very least, record the information you would need to find the source again, just in case you lose track of it and need to find it again.
- Create your own form for recording information according to your own needs and the documentation style you are using.