

Strategian Information Strategy

The steps below comprise a **basic strategy that can help you to find relevant, quality information**. Information which you may be seeking as part of writing a paper, preparing for a presentation, working on a lab experiment, answering a question, seeking more depth on a news report, etc.

This Information Strategy consists of the following four parts:

1. Define ... a topic by gathering authoritative and understandable overview information about it.

Likely sources for finding overview information:

--**encyclopedias**

--**textbooks**

--**articles from popularly-oriented magazines** (examples--*Science News*, *New Scientist*, *Scientific American*, etc.)

2. Identify ... specific sources of information relevant to the defined topic. These “sources of information” can include journal and magazine articles, books, government documents, Web sites, etc. (or reference works--encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, and so on--if seeking specific facts).

Generally, the quickest and most effective way to find relevant sources of information (save for reference works) is to **use appropriate indexes and abstracts**.

Often, the very last option you may want to try to identify research-oriented/scholarly information is to do a general search of the Internet using your favorite search engine or directory.

However, a general search of the Internet may be more effective when trying to find specific facts.

3. Locate ... the articles, books, documents, etc. identified above **at your local library**, online, or via interlibrary loan (or other similar means).

Ask questions of your local librarians. Your local library may have access to more sources of information than may appear in the library’s catalog.

4. Evaluate ... the validity, objectivity, and usefulness of the information you have gathered. This is **the most important of the four steps**.

Be skeptical about the information you gather. You don't need to be cynical, but a little skepticism is healthy ... and smart.

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