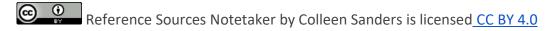# Reference Sources Notetaker

**Abstract:**

This assignment was created for an online, asynchronous module of library instruction at a community college. The module facilitates comprehension of scholarly articles through metacognitive reading strategies within the context of a subject-area research project. This assignment supports students in the early stages of an academic research project by scaffolding their discovery, comprehension, comparison, and use of reference sources. Students access 3 library databases and Wikipedia to find background information on their topic and utilize the notetaker as they find, read, and evaluate the resources they discover. They then repeat their search using Wikipedia and compare both the information and the search process to their experiences in library databases. The assignment focuses on product and process, with an emphasis on reflective engagement. It could be adapted to library one-shot instruction as a pre-, in-, or post-class assignment to scaffold student engagement with and evaluation of academic texts.

**Purpose:**

Background information provides the foundation for your research process: it introduces you to the history, scope, and central aspects of your subject so you can develop a topic whose scope is appropriate to your assignment. If you were to skip the background information step of the research process, you may omit key voices, themes, and aspects of your topic that weaken your thesis; you may also find that your topic is too broad to find relevant academic articles, which will lead to dead-ends, frustrations, and a longer research process.

The purpose of this assignment is to build your skills in finding background information from general and subject-specific references sources. This assignment helps you build an efficient, well-informed information base upon which to grow your thesis. It also helps you externalize your thought process to practice metacognition and make intentional choices about the information you use. This practice will build good research habits for all your future information-seeking projects. By the end of this assignment, you will be able to:

- Access general and subject-specific library reference databases

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- Apply topic-specific search terms to generate relevant results
- Evaluate reference information according to your topic's information needs
- Document and reflect on your internal thought processes and reactions to information
- Compare library reference sources with open source reference source Wikipedia

**Relevant Course Outcomes:**

(CG1) Define and develop an academic-level research topic.

(CG3) Practice information finding and evaluation skills across multiple format type and genres

(CG5) Practice citing sources and ethical use of information in academic research.

**Tasks:**

1. Download a copy of this document.
   a. File > Download as (select your preferred format) > Save to your computer with your name
2. Read the full Tasks and Criteria sections prior to beginning work.
3. Open the notetaker on your device - you will complete it as you search.
4. Use an Internet browser to access databases through the library [insert your library's A-Z Databases page or equivalent].
5. Select [General library reference database #1] and perform your search using your topic keywords.
6. When you find an article you want to use, complete the notetaker column for [General library reference database #1] by reading the article and responding to the questions.
7. Repeat this process for [General library reference database #2].
8. For your third database, choose either [subject-specific database #1 or #2].
   a. Indicate which one you chose by deleting the other from the column heading.
   b. Repeat Step 5 using this database and complete the corresponding column in the notetaker.
      i. If you get stuck searching or accessing databases, get help here [insert link to your library's help].
9. Repeat your search using Wikipedia to find one relevant article.
10. Complete the notetaker columns in the 'Wikipedia' section of the notetaker as you read the article.
11. Save your finished document and upload it through Canvas on the [assignment submission page].

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**Criteria:**

This assignment is worth 10 points. You will be graded for completeness and quality as outlined in the rubric below.

| Criteria | Ratings | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Meets Standard**<br>**5 Points**<br>*The submitted work:* | **Approaches Standard**<br>**3 Points**<br>*The submitted work:* | **Minimal Progress**<br>**1 Point**<br>*The submitted work:* |
| **Substance** | • demonstrates critical thought about the information<br>• demonstrates learner's reflection and response to information<br>• demonstrates learner's consideration of topic is widening and evolving<br>• connects information to topic ideas, real-world examples, and/or other course concepts | • demonstrates some critical thought but often just restates article information<br>• doesn't always focus entirely on the prompts<br>• demonstrates some thoughtful reflection and response but inconsistently, leaving room for improvement<br>• connects information to topic ideas, real-world examples, and/or other course concepts, but not in great depth or quantity | • is short, underdeveloped, and lacks substance, critical thought, reflection, response, widening topic knowledge, and/or connections amongst topic, real world, and course concepts. |
| **Completeness** | • responds to all prompts<br>• information in all fields is of sufficient length to evidence reflective engagement | • does not respond to all prompts<br>• information in some fields is short or underdeveloped to evidence reflective engagement | • is largely incomplete or offers many short and undeveloped responses |

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# Reference Sources Notetaker Assignment

**Name:**

**Research Topic:**

**Section 1: Library databases**

| Prompts | Your Answers | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1. General library reference database #1** | **2. General library reference database #2** | **3. [Offer 2 subject-specific reference databases for students to choose from. This could require a tutorial on sorting database A-Z for various topics]** |
| **Keyword(s) used** | | | |
| **APA or MLA citation for article including permalink** | | | |
| **This source is useful to my research because…** | | | |
| **I made a connection while reading this source about…** | | | |
| **Notes/new keywords.** *List concepts, events, people, facts, vocabulary, or other* | | | |

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| Prompts | Your Answers | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *background information you will save from this source* | | | |
| **This source develops my knowledge of my topic because...** | | | |
| **This source makes me want to focus my topic on...** | | | |
| **What research questions do you want to ask about your topic, given what you learned from this source?** | | | |
| **Did you encounter any information that caused you to react (emotionally, curiosity, skepticism, etc.) to what you read?** | | | |

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**Section 2: Wikipedia**

| Prompts | Your Answers |
|---|---|
| Keyword(s) used | |
| APA or MLA citation for article including link | |
| When did the content align with your database sources? When did it differ or diverge? | |
| How did the structure of this article differ from your database sources? | |
| Did Wikipedia include any sections/perspectives that the database sources did not? If so, which? Did Wikipedia exclude any sections/perspectives that the database sources include? If so, which? | |
| Scan the references of your Wikipedia article. How many references does it include? Do you see any that sound credible? Do you see any that seem low quality? | |
| Did you encounter any information that caused you to react (emotionally, curiosity, skepticism, etc.) to what you read in Wikipedia? If so, what information? How did you respond? | |
| Reflect on how Wikipedia compares to library reference databases. How might you use Wikipedia to your advantage in research, both for college and in life outside school? | |

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