



Research an Issue

Before You Start ...

Here are a few questions to think about as you begin your research:

- Is your topic too narrow (sports injuries in Newton) or too broad (smoking)?
- What are the facts and opinions on all sides of the issue?
- Who are the main supporters (people and organizations) on all sides of the issue?
- What other topics are related? For example, how does the economy impact the argument over education reform?
- Was the same issue also controversial in other times (example: sexually explicit music today and in the 1960s)?

Research Tips

Get the big picture first! Choose a general resource that will give you a short summary of your issue. Then move on to resources with more details. If you start with a detailed resource first, you'll get overwhelmed with too many facts and it will be harder to sift out the most important information.

Resources

Print

- Encyclopedias (general)
- Nonfiction books (in-depth)
- Almanacs (general) – Good for current statistics on important issues

Online Databases

- World Book Online (in-depth)
- InfoTrac (in-depth articles from hundreds of magazines between 1980 and the present)
- Newsbank (articles from the *Boston Globe* and *Herald*)

Important! You can search these same databases from home by going to the library's research page (www.newton.mec.edu/day/library/). Click on the red link for Metrowest Regional Library System and select Online Databases. Enter the barcode number from the back of your public library card and begin searching.

Internet

Choose a search engine (like Google) or a search directory (like Yahoo) and type in your search. If your search term is a phrase, remember to put it in quotation marks (example: "school uniforms") so it searches for both words together.

Remember to be skeptical about information you find on general web sites; it's a good idea to check any facts against more reliable sources like a print encyclopedia, a reference book, or a magazine article.