Library Helpsheet

Research with SHEP and CART

Needing to research a topic? Don't know where to start?
Well start with **SHEP**!

S = Strategy
H = Hunt
E = Evaluation
P = Plagiarism

Strategy – plan your research using a **mind map** to generate keywords, to see gaps in your knowledge, and to plan your assignment. Also plan the **resources** you will use for your research e.g. library books, internet, online resources.

Hunt – use your keywords to **search** for information in the sources you identified. Use the **Library catalogue** to find books available in the School Library and other North Ayrshire libraries.

See the **Using Google Effectively** helpsheet to improve your searches online by making them more refined to get better results.

Evaluate – assess the sources using **CART** (see below). Always remember the topic you are researching and ignore irrelevant information.

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's work as your own is plagiarism – it includes copying word for word from a paper based resource, or copying and pasting from the internet or an online resource.

Avoid plagiarising by **quoting** selected sentences and putting the information you find **into your own words**. Remember to keep a **note of all the resources** you use – newspapers, websites, books, magazines, blogs, interviews, eBooks, etc. – for your **bibliography.** (See the **Writing a Bibliography Helpsheet** for more details).

Evaluation

Every source of information must be evaluated before using it, especially if found on the internet as ANYONE can publish on the internet. This is particularly true of Wikipedia so make sure you use **CART** to assess the **validity** of your sources.

C = Current
A = Accurate
R = Relevant
T = Trust

Current – is the material up to date? If it is a historical issue you are researching, this is not as important, but for contemporary issues, the date is very important.

On a website, look for the **copyright date** (usually at the bottom of the page) if the article/information does not have a date. Check a news section to see the last entry and if e.g. it is 2015, then the information in the website is probably not up to date.
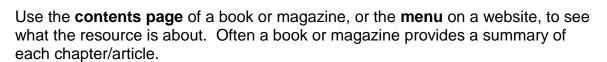
Accurate – Is the information what you expected to find? If not, check with other sources – if it is the same, you have found out something new! Does the article or information contain any obvious errors? Ignore if inaccurate - it is not a reliable source.

Relevant – using skimming and scanning techniques, quickly judge if an article/book is relevant i.e. useful information, before reading the whole thing.

Skimming is where you skim a page, chapter of a book, a magazine or webpage to get an idea of what it is about – to evaluate if it is relevant to your research.

Scanning is a method of quickly reading a page to find a specific piece of information you need – usually a keyword or phrase.

Use the **contents page** of a book or magazine, or the **menu** on a website, to see what the resource is about. Often a book or magazine provides a summary of each chapter/article.

Menus in websites often have a list of **topics**. If the topics listed are not what you are looking for, then move onto the next resource.

Use the **index** to find specific keywords in a book. Use **Find** on the internet to search for a keyword on a page – particularly useful if it is a long article so that you don't need to read it all; just the paragraph with your keyword.

Trust – is the information from a trustworthy source e.g. an organisation? (look for .org in the URL) Is the author/company likely to be **biased** for any reason? Is the information **opinion or fact**? Is the information from a **primary** (where first published and contains original information) or **secondary source** (published in another source; not where it was first published, and where the information may have been altered)?

Remember to keep a **note of the sources** you use for your research as you go along. Information sources you use for research should be listed in a **bibliography** (a list of the books, magazines, websites, etc. you used for research) at the end of your essay/assessment. See the **Writing a Bibliography Helpsheet** for details.

It is a good idea to have an open Word document when you are searching online. That way you can copy and paste the **URL** into the document (not the article!) and make a note of the information from the website which you found useful.