

Research Binder

Adapted from St. Lawrence's FYP program

This binder will record your research, including some sources that will definitely inform your documented essay and some whose usefulness is still questionable. The binder consists of two parts: 1) a record of your search histories, and 2) your evaluations and summaries of relevant sources. You may handwrite or type your responses. Put all materials in a folder or binder (or an electronic format if you can think of a way to do that) to submit at the beginning of class each time it is due (include all material from your first binder in your second binder too). Late binders will be severely penalized—one full grade per calendar day late.

Part I: Search Histories

Every time you do an online search on your topic, whether through a general search engine (e.g., Google) or a specific database (e.g., Wilson First Search), you should document the search. Wikipedia is neither a search engine nor a database. You will be graded on the number of relevant searches you performed, your thoroughness, and the usefulness of your selected search terms and databases.

A complete search history contains

- The date of each search.
- Name of the database searched.
- List of the search terms used
- Number of records found for those terms.
- Number of records looked at.
- Number of records determined worthy of further pursuit.

A search history entry should look like the following:

8/11/10: EBSCO Host: GreenFILE database

Search 1: recycling dangers

Results: 35,169 records sorted by publication date; scanned first 20; one seemed relevant

Search 2: recycling “occupational hazards” (search mode set to “find all my search terms”)

Results: 7 records sorted by relevance; looked at all; all appear useful.

Note: Some databases, like First Search, allow you to print out a history of your searches every time you use those databases. For Part I of your research binder, you may simply print out that history and write the required information above on that printout, or you can keep track on a separate sheet.

The first time you submit your Research Binder (October 22), you should record no fewer than 15 searches using at least 5 search engines (e.g., Google, EBSCO, Lexis Nexis, etc). The second time you submit your Research Binder (November 1), you should record at least 15 additional searches in at least 5 search engines. You may need to do more if you are not finding useful sources.

Part II: Evaluation and Summarizing Sources

Complete the Research Binder Worksheet for each source, duplicating it as needed. This will help you evaluate and summarize relevant, reputable sources. The first time you submit your Research Binder (October 22), include at least 10 worksheets along with copies of at least 6 sources potentially useful to your paper. The second time you submit your Research Binder (November 1), include at least 15 additional worksheets with copies of at least 10 additional sources potentially useful to your paper. NB: excellent sources may be found by examining the bibliographies of other scholarly works. You will be graded on the thoroughness and correctness of your worksheets as well as the relevance and quality of your sources.