

FINDING INFORMATION

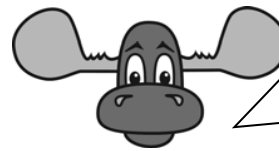
Research Strategy

As you start to gather information it is important to have a **research strategy**. Your strategy has two parts:

1. Finding sources of information
2. Keeping track of notes and sources

Where should I start?

The best place to begin your search for sources on your topic is in your school or local library. An encyclopedia is a good place to find basic information about your topic. Searching the Internet may also lead to some primary and secondary sources. It is important to find other sources of information and not depend only on encyclopedias and the Internet.



Books containing footnotes or a bibliography can provide you with listings of many other sources that the author used for their research, both primary and secondary, relating to your topic.

How can I find more sources?

Once you have collected the basic information and sources on your topic, you may want to try to locate some unique sources. Consider looking for primary sources and more scholarly secondary sources at:

- **Municipal, County, or College Libraries:** These libraries have more resources than school libraries. They are especially helpful because they have primary sources, such as old newspapers.
- **Historical Societies:** If your topic is on Minnesota history, a historical society may be helpful. State and local historical societies specialize in collecting information about Minnesota. Some historical societies and archives also have specialized collections that relate to national topics.
- **Interviews:** If people connected to your topic are still living, you can conduct oral history interviews with them. Contact your interview subject to set up a time and place to meet. Write your questions in advance and be prepared to take notes or record the interview. If you cannot meet in person you can send them questions in the mail, by e-mail or over the phone. Make sure to remember to send a thank you note to them afterwards!
- **Talk To a Librarian:** One of the best resources for finding information on your topic is a librarian or media specialist. These people are professional information-gatherers and are helpful in answering your research questions.

Using the Internet for History Day Research

The Internet is an extraordinary resource for research of all kinds, but it is not the answer to all your History Day research challenges. **What the Internet can do for you...**

- Along with reference books at your school library, the Internet is a great place to start your research. Find basic information about your topic or even figure out ways to narrow a topic.
- The Internet can even make your research trips to libraries more efficient! You can save valuable research time at the library by finding the library's available resources before you go.
- There are a growing number of sites that provide web access to primary sources. Once you narrow your topic, check to see if there are any primary sources available online.

Caution! Caution! Caution!

- Beware of questionable Internet sites. Remember, anyone can post information on the web! A site hosted by the Library of Congress is more likely to have accurate information than a site hosted by "Jane the Civil War buff." Think about the credibility of Internet sites just as you would other types of sources.
- Only a small percentage of source material is available on the Internet. Online research should be done in combination with more traditional historical research, not instead of it.
- Often students complain that they are finding the same information on each website they visit. Books often offer a deeper level of analysis than websites. Going offline can broaden your understanding of your topic.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SOURCES

When historians study a topic, they try to gather a wide variety of sources during their research. Historians use sources like a lawyer uses evidence. Both need information to "make their case." But not all sources are the same. Historians classify their sources in two categories: **Primary** and **Secondary**. You are going to need to use both types of sources for a successful History Day project.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are usually published books or articles by an author who makes a personal interpretation about a topic based on primary sources. **The writer is not an eyewitness to, or a participant in, the historic event.** Most books, encyclopedias, and websites are secondary sources. Secondary sources are useful because they provide important background information about your topic. The footnotes and bibliographies of secondary sources will also lead you to primary sources.

Examples of Secondary Sources:

- Biographies
- History textbooks
- Books about the topic
- Articles about the topic
- Encyclopedias
- Media documentaries
- Interviews with scholars/experts
- Websites

Primary Sources

Primary sources are materials **directly related to a topic by time or participation.** They provide a first-hand account about a person or an event because they were written or produced in the time period you are studying, are eyewitness accounts of historic events, are documents published at the time of specific historic events, or are later recollections by participants in historic events.

Examples of Primary Sources:

- Historic objects
- Government records
- Photographs
- Manuscript collections
- Newspapers from the era
- Music of the era
- Interviews with participants
- Letters
- Original film footage
- Autobiographies

STAYING ORGANIZED

Information is only valuable if you can record it and use it later. One of the best ways to organize your research is to use note cards. Use one set of cards to record **notes and quotes** that you find in your sources. Use another set of cards to record the information about your sources that you will need for your **annotated bibliography**. Here are examples of index cards for a bibliographic entry and research notes about a women's rights crusader from Minnesota named Clara Ueland.

Bibliography	Secondary Source	Book
Gilman, Rhoda R.	<u>Northern Lights: The Story of Minnesota's Past.</u>	
	St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.	
This book contained a profile of Clara Ueland and her efforts to win voting rights for women. It also described the history of the suffrage movement in Minnesota. Illustrations in this book included a picture of Clara Ueland, a suffrage poster, and a picture of women voting for the first time in 1920.		
Important Pages: 171-175		

Bibliography Cards track the sources you used. Fill these out as you use each source. It will make your life easier when you go to create your bibliography later.

Note Cards track your notes, ideas, and quotes.

Clara Ueland's early career and suffrage ideas	Gilman, P. 172
Clara Hampson Ueland taught school before she married Minneapolis lawyer Andreas Ueland. She started to work in the suffrage movement with other well-educated women.	
"For years women had said that it was only fair for them to help to make the laws that they had to obey." (Gilman)	
As president of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association in 1914, Clara Ueland declared that, "Mothers, from the beginning, have been the force that makes for better homes and higher civilization. This concern for home should be expressed in government." (Clara Ueland)	

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Successful research involves more than just finding all the information out there about a topic. You will never be able to find—or read—all this information. Having a narrow topic will help you to keep their projects to a manageable size, but you can focus your research and project even more by developing research questions.

Writing Research Questions

Good historical research questions will allow you to investigate issues of cause and effect, change over time, differences in perspective, etc. What were the causes of past events? What were the effects? How did past decisions or actions affect future choices? What has changed?

- **Research questions are different than information-seeking questions.** Information-seeking questions help you to understand the basic facts about your topic. When was the 19th amendment passed? Who was the first president of the United States? How does a bill become a law? You will likely answer these questions just by reading an encyclopedia article about your topic.

WORKSHEET: WRITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Brainstorm a variety of questions about your topic. Try selecting the most interesting two or three questions to guide your research.

Category	Sample: Rosa Parks	Your Topic
Cause and Effect What were the causes of past events? What were the effects?	Why did the city of Montgomery have these policies? Why did Rosa Parks and others decide that it was a good time to take a stand? What impact did the bus boycott have in and beyond Montgomery?	
Through their Eyes How did people in the past view their world?	What motivated Rosa Parks to take a stand against segregation? What were the motivations of city officials in Montgomery for arresting her?	
Change and Continuity What has changed? What has remained the same?	How did the city of Montgomery and government policy change during the course of the Civil Rights Movement?	
Turning Points How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?	How was the Montgomery Bus Boycott a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement? How were things different in Montgomery and the Civil Rights Movement after this event?	

Question categories adapted from "Thinking Like a Historian," by Bobbie Malone and Nikki Mandell, published by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

WORKSHEET: RESEARCH STRATEGY

Plan a strategy for your History Day research, including what to search for and where to look.

Topic: _____

1. What are some important words, dates, or people related to your topic? These words will help you to search for information. Remember to check spelling!

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. What types of secondary sources might exist about your topic? From the list below, circle the types of sources you think you could find about your topic.

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Book | Media documentary | Encyclopedia |
| History textbook | Biography | Website |
| Interview with scholar | | |

3. What types of primary sources might exist about your topic? From the list below, circle the types of sources you think you could find about your topic.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Diary | Manuscript collection | Government records |
| Interview with participant | Autobiography | Newspaper from the time period |
| Original film footage | Music of the period | Photographs |
| Historic objects | Letters | |

4. Where can you go to find this information? Answer the following questions and think about the places you could visit for your research.

A. What is the first place you plan on looking for information? _____

B. Where else can you look? Circle which of the following you plan on using for your research.

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|----------|
| School Library | Public/Local Library | Internet |
|----------------|----------------------|----------|

C. What other places can you go? Brainstorm nearby college or university libraries and list below.

D. Is there a History Day Hullabaloo you could attend or a **field trip** that your school plans on going on? If so, write the date and location below.
