

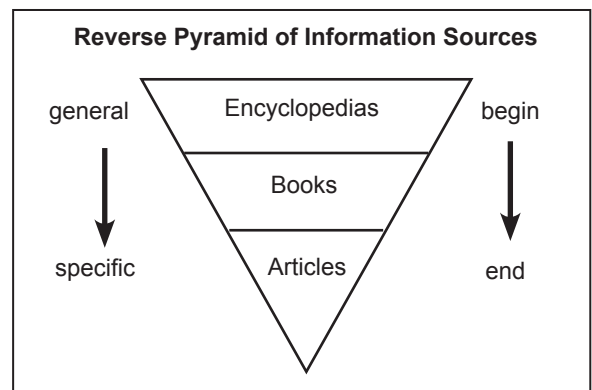
8 Steps to Research Success

- 1. Start at the source.** The UNB Libraries’ website is the best starting place: lib.unb.ca. You will find thousands of electronic publications, including academic journal articles and e-books not available elsewhere on the internet. Plus, you will be directed to the 1.5+ million print volumes in the libraries’ collections. Google cannot give you that.
- 2. Know your topic.** Make sure your research topic is not too broad, too specific, or lacking context. Write your topic as a specific question to focus your research, and get context from an encyclopedia.

- 3. Descend the pyramid.** With so much information available to you, where should you start? Try the “reverse pyramid” method: start with the most general information and then move on to publications that tend to be more specific.

At the beginning of your research, a reference tool such as an encyclopedia can provide a general overview of your topic and put it into a broader context. **Go beyond Wikipedia**—the library has thousands of more reliable academic reference articles, both online and in print.

After getting an overview, move on to more in-depth books, and finally go to the most specific (and perhaps more technical) journal articles last.



- 4. Choose the right tools.** The publications listed above can be found by using various “discovery tools”—databases on the libraries’ website which let you discover different types of publications. From lib.unb.ca, you can find books, e-books, and a selection of articles via the **UNB WorldCat** search box. To dig deeper and find more articles, including encyclopedia articles, try a **Subject Guide** for your research area, which will direct you to librarian-recommended tools. Choose your subject area from the list under the heading **Research by Subject** on the homepage (lib.unb.ca).
- 5. Evaluate your results.** Your search will probably result in a lot of information—perhaps lists of hundreds of publications. How can you choose the best? Here are some basic things to consider.

Author’s qualifications (Is s/he affiliated with a university or research organization?)

Publisher (Is it a university press, for example?)

Publication date (Do you require the latest information, or a classic or standard text?)

Length (Is the publication too brief? Too detailed?)

References (Reliable research publications usually list their sources.)

Subject/content details (Abstracts, subject headings, descriptors, tables of contents?)

Peer review (Academic journals use this rigorous publication process.)

Also consider how the publications compare with the general body of academic literature in the subject area. It is usually best to **research broadly** to ensure you find a range of perspectives which generally represent academic thinking on your topic.

6. Read it! Take time to carefully read the key information sources you find, not just skim or scan them. You may need to “unplug” and find a quiet corner of the library. Think carefully about the arguments and ideas presented by the author. Keep in mind that any subject expert who reads your research assignment (such as your professor) will likely be able to tell whether or not you have fully and critically comprehended the sources you reference.

7. Write right. There are several standard writing guides at the library. For a list of recommended titles, see media.lib.unb.ca/research/handbooks.pdf

Visit a Writing Centre website to find online writing guides:

UNB: go.unb.ca/wss >> Writing Answers

STU: moodle.stu.ca >> Courses >> Writing Centre

UNB Fredericton

- UNB students can visit the UNBF Writing Centre (Harriet Irving Library, Room 410).
- Book appointments online (go.unb.ca/wss), by email (wss@unb.ca), or by phone (452-6346).
- During regular terms, the UNBF Writing Centre offers “drop-in hours” in the Harriet Irving Library and the Engineering Library.

St. Thomas University

- St. Thomas students can visit the STU Writing Centre (Edmund Casey Hall, Room 102).
- Book appointments online (writingcentre.stu.ca).
- Contact the Coordinator (writingcentre@stu.ca; 506-452-0480) for more information.

8. Take time to seek out the research experts. Do not assume that you will be able to find everything you need for a research paper in an hour or two. All aspects of the learning process require time. Finding relevant and reliable information, critically reading and evaluating it, and writing clearly about it—all are **time-intensive** activities. As a general rule, expect the research process to take about three times as long as the writing process. You will likely need some help along the way. When you do, remember that the library is in the business of providing research help:

Research Help Desk ~ Harriet Irving Library

Location: Main/First Floor

Phone: 506-453-3546

Email: askus@unb.ca

Instant Message: lib.unb.ca/help/ask.php

Text: 506.800.9044

Online Help: lib.unb.ca/research



Subject Liaison Librarians

These librarians provide advanced research help in their subject areas.

For contact information, see the relevant **Subject Guide**, as mentioned in Step 4.

This information sheet is based on UNB Libraries' ***A Guide to Research Success***, available at the Harriet Irving Library and at media.lib.unb.ca/research/success.pdf or at lib.unb.ca/research/success.php

This **8 Steps** sheet is also available at media.lib.unb.ca/research/8steps.pdf