



# Starting research for your assignment: video tutorial

<http://www.screencast.com/t/XJEcEtCkCbR>

## Transcript

**Introduction:** Welcome to this tutorial on Starting Researching your Assignment from the University of Reading Study Advice team. The tutorial is designed for you to go through at your own pace and you can pause it at any time.

**Slide 1:** Now you may know that it is good to do some planning before you start \*writing\* an assignment, but it is also a good strategy to do some planning before you start \*researching\* your assignments too. A bit of planning will stop you from floundering around and help you find what you need efficiently.

**Slide 2:** When you start your research it can seem like you're adrift in a huge sea of information. But two things can provide you with good guidance to start from: 1) the purpose of your assignment - what you are being asked to do will show you the kinds of information you need, for example do you need to evaluate a single theory or explore a broader field of research? and 2) your own ideas on the topic - then you can test your initial ideas against what you read without becoming overwhelmed by what everyone else thinks first.

**Slide 3:** When you have identified your purpose and initial ideas, you can start from what you know (maybe from lectures or background reading) and then identify what you need to find out from your research (to help keep it targeted and on track). Importantly, also think about \*where\* you can find this information out. Don't just settle for Googling it or picking the first likely source you see - use reputable academic sources by searching using the Library catalogues and your subject databases and always evaluate your sources - you never know what kind of disreputable information may be out there.

**Slide 4:** Another important part of your research plan is to define the limits of your search. Things like the time you have available, your word count, your marking criteria and the number of marks it is worth will all show you how much research is appropriate and will make it much more manageable and motivating. A top tip is always start from the time you actually have available, \*not the time you would like to have\* and plan backwards to allocate a realistic block of time for research.

**Slide 5:** Use the time you have for research efficiently. Just casting about for things that seem interesting and reading without a focus can leave you with a lot of random notes and not as much as you'd like to show for it. It is important to keep coming back to your purpose and assignment title to guide you. For further tips on working efficiently, see the tutorials on Managing Academic Reading and on Critical Note-Making in this series and also on Targeted Reading and Use of Evidence in our Essay Writing series.

**Slide 6:** The basis of efficient research comes from keeping good records. Now you may be well aware of the need to keep the full bibliographical details of your sources for your reference list. But before that also keep track of the combinations of search terms you used and where you searched for sources – noting down your search strategy will prevent you getting confused about what you've already looked for.

**Summary:** So to summarise: plan your research strategy, start from your own ideas, limit your research by identifying what to find out and where to find this information, and always keep good records. If you do these things, you will start catching the sources you need.