

Skills Guide

THE OCR ENTRY LEVEL GUIDE TO FINDING OUT

Version 2

This guide on 'Finding out' has been produced by OCR to help you understand the skills and techniques you will need to develop, practice and use in studying for your chosen qualification. This guide has not been written to go with any one qualification but focuses on research skills that are in many areas of both education and work environments. Other skills guides are available at www.ocr.org.uk.

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How can I find out things?

These days it is very easy to find all kinds of information using a computer, mobile telephone or tablet, as the internet makes finding information very easy, so long as you know what you are looking for.

The internet was invented by several people over many years but in 1980 Sir Tim Berners-Lee developed a piece of software that would give people who were researchers, a way of sharing information. He called the software Enquire. In 1991 Berners-Lee and another colleague wrote a programme which used hypertext and the World Wide Web (www) was born. The first website was Info.cern.ch

and now there are more than 227 million websites in the world which have 65 billion web pages. The internet has transformed our lives, but how useful is it?

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/qj/8419186/QI-Quite-interesting-facts-about-the-Internet.html>

Before the internet was widely available we would find things out from books and go the library. Books and libraries still exist, but when was the last time you went to the library to find out some information?

Stages of collecting information

You may have to find out some information for your course at school or college, so how can you do this?

Firstly it is important to be sure exactly what information you are looking for. If you do not do this then you may research the wrong topic, so be clear what information you actually need.

Once you are sure what you are looking for, think about the different ways you can find out the information. Could you:

- Talk to someone? Is this person a family member? A teacher? A tutor?
- Get the information from a book?
- Go to the library?
- Look in a newspaper or magazine?
- Look in a leaflet?
- Search on the internet?

You need to have a plan which will help you get the most out of all the information that you are finding.

Once you have thought about the different ways you could find the information, you should be ready to start, but will you:

- Take notes?
- Photocopy the information?
- Print out the information?
- Save it on a USB?

These are things that you must think about as you may need some equipment such as a USB stick if that is how you are going to store and use the information at a later time.

You now have lots of information, but what should you do with it? This is the time to read all of it and decide which parts are good and which parts are not good and are not needed.

The final stage is to write up your work using the information you have found and hand in to your tutor/ teacher on time. Then you just have to wait for the result of all your hard work!



The internet

The internet is like a massive book with lots of different chapters that we can read. Some information is old and some is very new so how can you decide which to use?

Using a search engine such as Google or Yahoo will mean that you can type in a keyword or topic that you want to research and it will search the internet to find the closest match to the words. You could also put in a question such as 'when was the internet invented?' and the internet search engine will come up with several websites that you could look at.

How can you trust the information? The best way to see if the information is correct is to look at a few different websites and then see how different the information is. Check who has written the information. You can not always be 100% certain that everything on a website is correct. Websites that end .gov.uk are good to check as these belong to UK Government organisations.

The good things about the internet are that:

- There is information on more subjects that you could ever imagine

- You can research at home instead of having to go to the library (unless you don't have the internet at home)
- Different websites are aimed at children and adults
- You can email people to find out information
- Information can be found very quickly

There are however some disadvantages to the internet:

- Some information can be wrong or misleading
- You can waste time searching for the wrong information
- You have be careful not to give out personal information online. Never give out your passwords or other personal information. Do not trust anyone you do not know.

Be careful when using the internet. If you want more advice on keeping safe on the internet go to: http://safe.met.police.uk/internet_safety/get_the_facts.html or <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>



What is research?

Research is a way of finding out new information, so that you are able to understand and learn a new topic. It is a skill that is very important and useful and can be used at school, college, work and in your personal life. It is important that when you are researching you ask the right questions so that you do not discover the wrong information and have to start all over again!

- You are going on holiday next week but don't know what clothes to take with you and how much spending money you will need. How could you find out?
- Jenny's aunt wants to buy a new mobile phone. She cannot decide which model she should buy. What research could Jenny do to help her aunt decide which phone is best for her?
- You have some coursework to complete on researching the Falklands War in the 1980s. You have a relative who served in the Falklands War but he lives far away. How could you research this topic? What methods could you use?



Primary research

There are two main ways that you can find information. Primary research means that you find all the information you need yourself. Often people will use a questionnaire to try and ask as many people as possible certain questions to find out what they think about something.

It could be:

- A number of questions on a new chocolate bar that a business is selling
- A new mobile telephone that is going to be launched and the company want your opinion on the new technology
- Your tutor/teachers may want you to answer some questions on life as a student.

These are all types of Primary research that you could use to investigate and come to a decision using the research collected. In your studies you may need to write a questionnaire, so here are some tips to help you.

- Think about who will answer the questionnaire – will it be children? If so, make sure the questions are easy for them to read. Will it be for adults or older people? Maybe it will be for anyone? You will then know who to approach when asking the questions in your questionnaire.
- How many people do you need to ask to get an overview of opinions, so that your research will help you find the answers you need.

Having thought about the points on the previous page, here are some handy hints to create the perfect questionnaire.

- Make sure you have a clear title at the top and some instructions for the person filling in the questionnaire.
- If you want your questionnaire to be filled in quickly, you should use closed questions. A closed question is one that has a yes or no answer, for example – does $4 + 4 = 8$? or, have you finished your homework? Give people options to circle for their answers. It will make it easier when you review the completed questionnaires.
- If you would like longer answers you should use open questions, these are questions which need more than one word to answer, for example – why do some leaves change colour in autumn? Or, what are you planning on buying at the supermarket today?
- Try to keep your questionnaire to one or two pages (10-15 questions) which should be typed so it looks professional. If it is too long, people might be put off and may not want to help you with your research.
- Proof read your work before you hand out your questionnaire, as spelling mistakes do not give a good impression.

- Test your questionnaire on a friend first to check all the questions get the right responses and they make sense.
- Add 'Thank you' at the bottom of your questionnaire as someone is helping you out as part of your studies.

Here is an example questionnaire:

Vegran is a company that has recently developed a healthy cereal bar made from carob and oats.

Please circle your honest answers

Do you like cereal bars?
Yes No

Do you like chocolate biscuits?
Yes No

How many times a week do you eat a cereal bar?
0 1-2 3-4 5-6 more than 7

How much do you pay for your cereal bars?
None 30-50p 51-70p 71-90p more than 90p

Do you like oats?
Yes No

Have you ever tried carob which looks like chocolate but is a healthier alternative?
Yes No

Would you try a carob bar?
Yes No

How much do you spend on snack bars a week?
None £1-2 £2.01-£3 More than £3

Thank you for your time.

Now you have completed your questionnaire, you can now check the results to gain the opinions of the people that you asked. Did anything surprise you? Was it helpful? What could have been done differently?

How will you present your findings? Will you use graphs, pictures, tables or write up the results in words? What would be most useful and easiest to understand?

Other examples of primary research are:

- Tests – a person could be watched (or observed) completing a number of activities or tasks and the results compared to others.
- Experiments which scientists or mathematicians use to find out something new or to test information that is already known.

Let's Find Out!

John needs to find out for his marketing assignment if a new drink would sell to 13-17 year olds. Think of 5 questions that he could ask people if he was to create a questionnaire. Discuss your questions with your group.

Secondary research

Secondary research is information that has already been written and collected by someone else. We are then able to read about it and maybe use it for coursework if it is suitable.

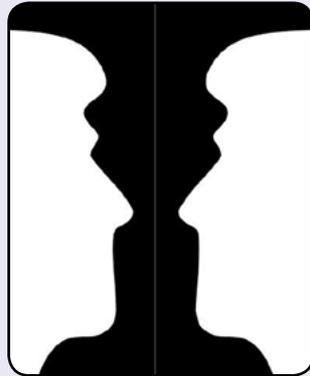
As we said earlier in this guide, you should always check that the information you use is correct. The most frequently used secondary resource these days is the internet and earlier in this guide we have identified the good and bad points about the internet. It is however a great sources of information. Other secondary sources of information are:

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Books
- Reports
- DVDs/CDs.

If you do use any of these examples of secondary research for information then they will have other people's comments and views on the topics which you may or may not agree with. If you use a picture or image or words from a website, it is important that you say where you got it from. You do this by putting in the web address from where you have copied the information in your work or at the very end of the assignment. If you do not do this, then you are saying that all the written words and pictures are your own which it will not be. This is known as PLAGIARISM which is not allowed and could result in you failing your course.

Let's Find Out!

Look at these four different images.



What do you see? Discuss with your friend. You will discover that not everyone shares the same opinion just like with secondary sources of information.

How can I present my work?

Before you start to write up your work, double check if your coursework or assignment says how it should be presented. If you are in any doubt ask your tutor/teacher.

Here are some tips to make sure that your work is presented well which will make a good impression:

- Think about who will be reading your work and make sure that the words and style is suitable. Only use words that you understand.
- Have a clear introduction to your work saying what it is about.
- Think about the font and size of the text you will use and keep it all the same throughout your document.
- Make sure you write in paragraphs leaving an amount of space between the paragraphs so it is easy to read.
- Write in full sentences or if you have a number of points to say, use bullet points or numbers to show the different parts.
- If you include images from the internet remember to say which website you got them from.
- End your work with a conclusion which should briefly explain what you have discovered in your work.
- Take pride in your work and allow time to make sure it looks professional.
- Proof read your work before handing to your tutor/teacher – you could get a family member to help you with this or a friend.
- Hand in to your tutor/teacher on time and not late, as this does not create a good impression.

Activity

See if you can answer the following questions about Finding Out Information from the information you have learnt in this guide.

Circle your answer.

1. An example of primary research is a book?
True False
2. If you quote something from a newspaper you do not need to state the source.
True False
3. Secondary data already exists?
True False
4. Proof reading is important?
True False
5. An experiment is an example of primary research.
True False
6. Research is a way of discovering new information.
True False
7. Information on the internet is always true
True False

Compare your results with a friend.

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Answers to 'Let's Find Out!' activity on page 7:

Do you see an older lady or a young woman; A baby or a tree scene; Pillars or people; a horses face or a frog (if you turn the image around).

Answers to activity on page 8:

1. False 2. False 3. True 4. True 5. True 6. True 7. False

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