





# A LEVEL GEOGRAPHY

## Undertaking research and your literature review

The independent investigation is an opportunity for you to find out about an aspect of A Level geography in more depth.

### Why do research?

-  Helps you generate ideas
-  Develops your understanding of a topic / issue
-  Helps your investigation to 'take shape' e.g. your title, proposal form, and methodology
-  You can analyse what you found in 'real life' (fieldwork and data collection) against your research

### When do you need to do research?

#### Proposal form

To help narrow down your ideas for a title and sub-questions. To decide where, what and how you would like to investigate and whether it is a suitable location?

#### Methodology

To think through and plan how you will collect data and evidence (primary and secondary). Whether you want to do a quantitative or qualitative investigation.

#### Literature review

To learn more about your chosen title/topic to develop your understanding, before collecting any data.

### Where do you start with your investigation research?



Key words in your title / sub-questions



Which sources you have access to and where?

### What are valid sources for research?



Textbooks (beyond the main course textbook)	Journal articles e.g. Geo Journal
Websites e.g. USGS, Census, WHO or NASA	Newspapers and magazines e.g. Geography Review
Government reports e.g. coastal management	Social media – (informal sources) e.g. blogs, Twitter



### Where can you look for information?

- Your centre's geography dept/library
  - Geography Review
  - Geofile/Geoactive
  - Geofact sheets (See: 344, 350, 371)
  - Top Spec (Geographical Association)
  - <https://scholar.google.com/>
  - [Geo Journal](#)
  - [Geographical](#)
  - JSTOR open access [books and journals](#)
  - [Taylor & Francis online](#)
- Check if your centre has access
- Free open access

[Poster – A guide to reading the research landscape](#) (Ideas for different investigations)

You can evaluate your sources of information, to [consider bias](#) as you research.

### How much research do you need to do?

As you will be researching at different stages of your investigation, you will be exploring relevant sources for your title, methodology and literature review. You do not need to do extensive reading but enough to secure your knowledge and move your investigation forward.

### How do you keep track of sources used?



Take notes from your research



Keep a list of the sources you have accessed (see bibliography section)

## What is the purpose of a literature review?

To get background information which may be used in a variety of ways:



To get the most up-to-date thinking about a topic or subject



To explore relevant geographical models, concepts, or theories.



To help set the context of your investigation, e.g. locational details



To explore similar examples and places.



To show local opinions e.g. blogs

Ref: [OCR student guide to the Investigation](#) (p6-7)

## Why is a literature review important?

- Demonstrates your understanding of a topic
- Helps you to clarify your thinking
- Can be used in your analysis, you can compare what you found (fieldwork) to the academic literature

## What do we mean by models, concepts or theories?

### Models in geography

Represent phenomenon observed e.g. help to identify patterns, trends, processes. These can be used to test geographical information. Examples include: Cycle of deprivation, [Park Model](#) (Hazards) or the [Egan Wheel](#)

### Concepts in geography

Provide a framework to understand/interpret the world. The following concepts are included throughout the A Level geography specification e.g. causality, systems, equilibrium, feedback, inequality, representation, identity, globalisation, interdependence, mitigation and adaptation, sustainability, risk, resilience, and thresholds

**Theories in geography** – represents ideas from research. Theories such as - Plate Tectonics, Systems, Placemaking and Development.

Models, theories or concepts can be used to add some academic 'weight' to your research. You can look at what you find through your fieldwork and data collection and compare this to what you expected to find i.e. what the model, theory or concept showed. This can be a helpful way to approach your analysis.



## How long does the literature review need to be?

This should not be a lengthy section as the recommended word length for your whole investigation is 3-4,000 words.



## How do I structure my literature review?

- Explain and unpack your title and sub-questions by exploring relevant literature
- Organise your ideas/thinking by theme
- Summarise key points that you will refer to later (analysis, conclusions and evaluation)

Further information [here](#) and [University of Leicester](#)



## How do I record the sources I have used?

There are [free tools](#) which can help to capture your sources and reference them.

## What is a bibliography?

This is a list of all the sources you have accessed through your research that have influenced your investigation. It is important to list them in a bibliography, so you do not plagiarise other people's work.

You need to use [Harvard referencing](#) to display your bibliography.



## OCR Resources: the small print

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