

How to Research a Topic Online



Online research is a crucial skill, whether you're working on an academic paper, writing a blog post, or just trying to learn something new about your houseplants. But it's not always easy when you're tackling a complicated or niche topic.

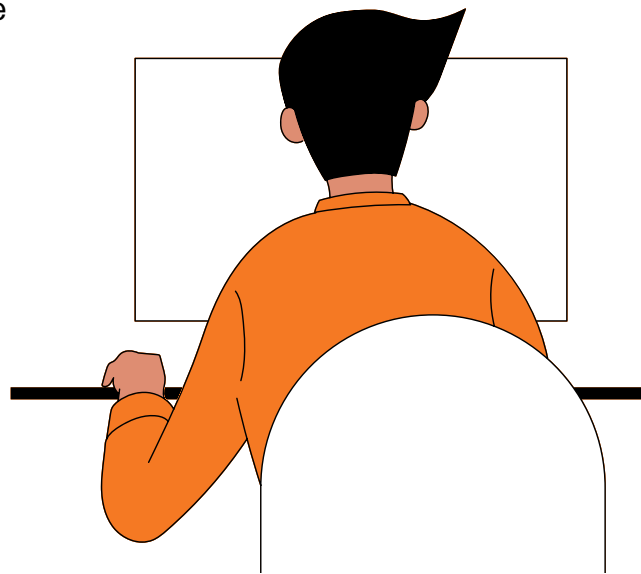
STEP 1

Organise Your Information Early On

Organizing your information can help you save time, and it can save you from forgetting or misremembering anything that you've learned from your research. You should keep a link (bookmark) to every webpage you visit from the start to the end of your research. It's best to write down a little bit of information for each link so that you remember why you saved them and what kind of information you could take from them.

If you need to organize a lot of data across multiple devices, consider using a note-taking app like Evernote, OneNote, or Google Keep. They're all great for keeping track of web pages, PDF's, photos, and whatever else you need for your big project.

There are data collecting tools that include Pinterest and making a folder in Google Drive and adding links to the platforms.



STEP 2

Start Broad and Collect a Lot of Information

When researching, it's tempting to dive straight into the first exciting thing that you find. But you should try to start as broad as possible. Otherwise, you might miss out on some fascinating pieces of information and end up with a poor understanding of your topic.

That's why you should try to find a lot of information on your topic, more than you think that you'll need. A good way to start broad is to search Google for general terms related to your topic.



Wikipedia is a fantastic place to begin your research. You can use Wikipedia to find a lot of general information on your topic, and you can use it to find related topics or primary sources that may be useful as you go deeper into your research.

STEP 3

Decide What's Important, and Narrow Things Down

Once you've collected a broad swath of data, you need to review everything and decide on what to focus. Don't just go for the first thing that sounds interesting to you. Try to find any new relationships between the different pieces of information that you've gathered.

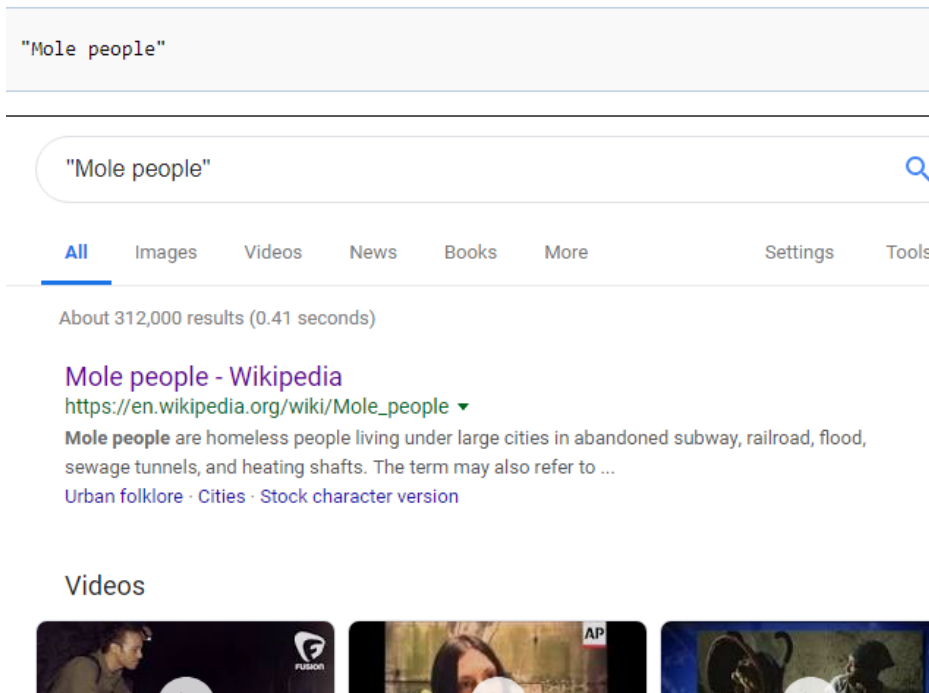
It's okay to research a relationship that seems obvious or well-known, especially if you're writing a blog, doing personal research, or doing a rudimentary history paper. But if you want to find something unique, then you need to think about how to narrow your research.

STEP 4

Optimize Your Google Search

Okay, you're ready to do some more in-depth research. Now what? If you're looking into something that's kind of unique, then you may have trouble finding some good search results on Google.

If you need to look up exact phrases or names on Google, then you can put them in quotation marks. For example, if you search the phrase "mole people" on Google, then you'll only find pages that contain the word "mole" followed by the word "people."

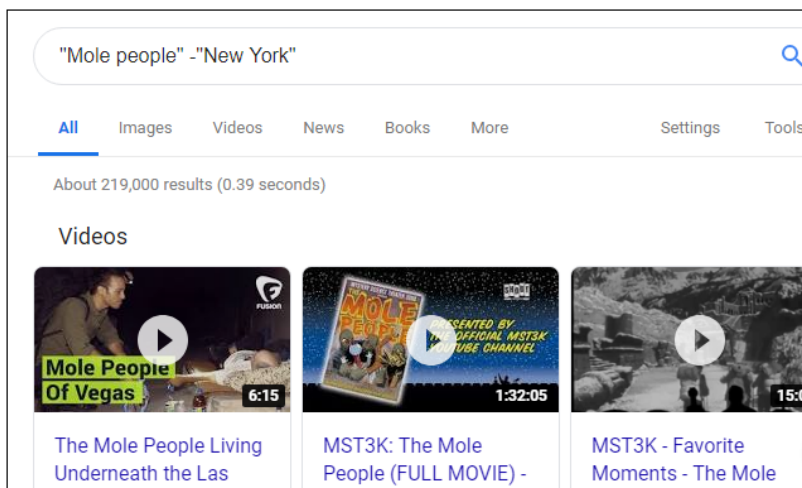


The idea of starting broad and then narrowing your search applies to searching the web, too.

For example, if your search for "mole people" includes too many results related to New York, then you could use a minus sign to exclude those results. This is what it would look like:

"Mole people" -"New York"

Note that we also used quotation marks around "New York" in that search because we want the whole phrase excluded.



Activities

Exercise 1

Fill in the blank

1. Online research is a crucial skill whether you are working on _____
2. A bookmark is a _____
3. The most used note-taking app are _____.
4. We use google search for more _____
5. _____ is a fantastic place to start your search
6. If you need to look up exact phrases or names on Google, then you _____

Exercise 2

What are three search engines you can use?

- 1: _____
- 2: _____
- 3: _____

Exercise 3

Label the pictures!



1



2



3

Answer Key

Exercise 1

Fill in the blank

1. Online research is a crucial skill, whether you're working on an academic paper, writing a blog post, or trying to learn something new
2. A bookmark is a record of the address of a website
3. The most used note-taking app are Evernote, OneNote, or Google Keep.
4. We use google search for a more broad search broad
5. Wikipedia is a fantastic place to start your search
6. If you need to look up exact phrases or names on Google, then you can put them in quotation marks.

Exercise 2

What are three sites you can use for online searches?

- 1: Google
- 2: Bing
- 3: Yahoo!

Exercise 3

Label the pictures!



Wikipedia



Google



Yahoo!