Finding Sources

*Most types of source are not useful for all kinds of research, and no one type of source will be sufficient to fully answer a good research question.*

**Example:** Should the South Australian government offer rebates on residential solar panel installation?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source type** | **Unique information provided** |
| *News articles* | Big picture, discovering common points of view on solar panels and budgets |
| *Books* | Understanding solar panel technology |
| *Magazines* | Availability and pricing of solar panel installations |
| *Surveys* | Public feeling towards solar panels and government rebates |
| *Interviews* | Expert opinions on government budgets or technologies |

Common Source Types

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Source type** | **Where to find** | **How to find information** | **General use** |
| *Books* | Local library | Library catalogue | Understanding a topic |
| *Magazines* | Local library | Magazine database | Topic-specific opinions |
| *Academic journal* | University library | Journal database | Deeper information |
| *Websites\** | Internet | Search engine | Surface information |
| *Newspaper* | Local library | Newspaper database | Current or past issues |
| *Photographs* | State library | Library archives | Primary source evidence |
| *Statistics* | Internet | Bureau of statistics | Primary source data |
| *Interviews* | Talk to others | Phone or email | Expert opinions |
| *Field trips* | Do it yourself | Take photos/videos/samples | Specific primary data |
| *Surveys* | Do it yourself | Hand out or email surveys | Data about a population |
| *Encyclopedia* | Internet | Depends on encyclopedia | Surface understanding |

**\*Not all sources found on the Internet are ‘websites’**For example: books can be found online as e-texts, news articles can be published on the web, etc.

Questions to ask for each chosen source type to use for a research question:

1. **What** type of source will I use? (This may include sources not listed above)
2. **How** will I find/obtain information? (*Who* to interview, *where* to look, and other specifics)
3. **Why** will this type of source be useful? (Relate this specifically to aspects of the question)

Highlighting and Annotating

*Highlighting and annotating is a way of* actively reading *a source.* *A lot of the information in a source will not be directly relevant to your research question, or will require further research to make use of.*

**Do**

* Ensure that you have the details for each source (URL, Author, Title etc.)
* Evaluate each source
* Comment on evidence of bias or credibility
* Identify key words and phrases
* Use different colours to highlight different parts of the answer
* Write notes to yourself about things to look into further
* Look up definitions for difficult words
* Compare information against other sources
* Write what information is relevant to question and reasons why (key findings)

**Don’t**

* colour in or circle entire paragraphs
* ignore factors outside the article text (such as ads or links on web pages)
* skip over words you don’t understand
* believe everything you read
* get distracted from your question