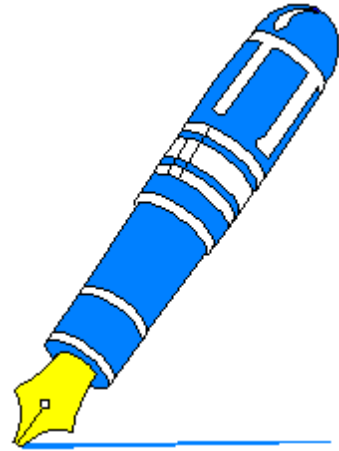


Writing Skills I

Finding Information on Current Issues



_____ NAME

_____ DATE

Revised Oct. 2009

Choose a topic that interests you from the list below.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Child labor | Censorship | Marijuana | Capital punishment |
| Terrorism | Juvenile crime | Affirmative action | Animal rights |
| Electoral College | Divorce | Homosexuality | Attention deficit disorder |
| Health insurance | Sexual harassment | Anabolic steroids | Gambling |
| Cloning | Feminism | Global warming | |

Or you may choose another current issue that interests you.

What topic did you choose? _____

1. Finding Background Information

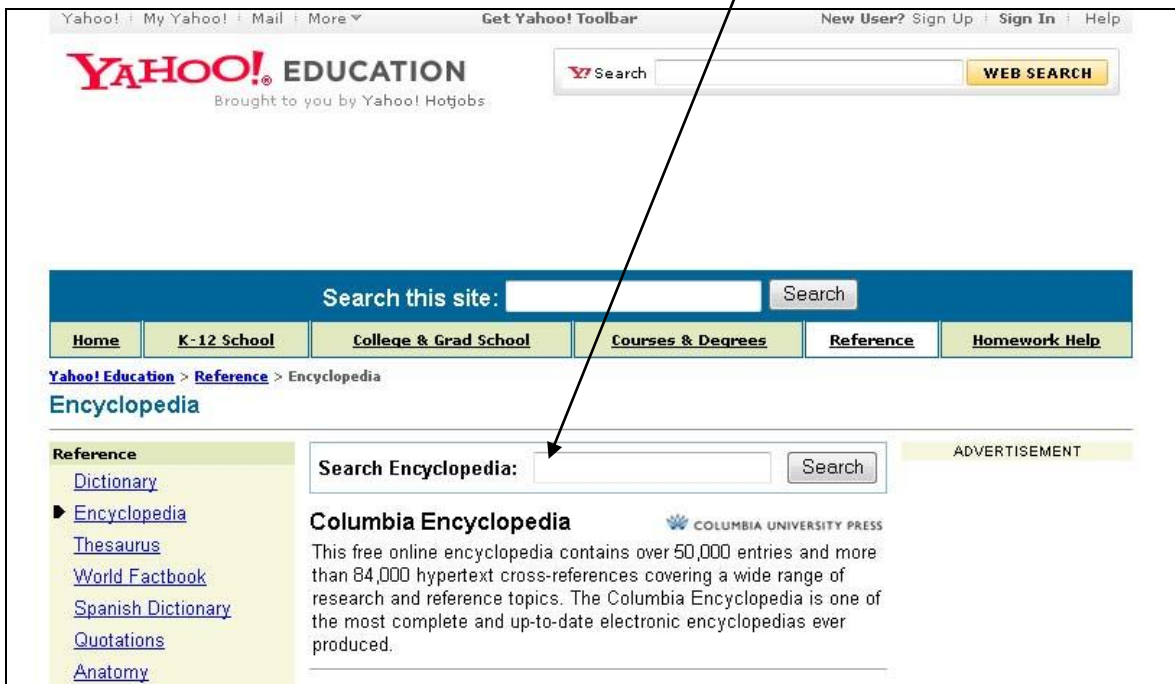
It's important to get an overview of the topic so that you have a general understanding of the issue. Background information may include: the history of an issue; why it's controversial or in the news, and facts and statistics. Sources for background information include encyclopedias, almanacs and other materials. These are called **reference** sources.

Exercise 1. Using an online encyclopedia

You will use *Columbia Encyclopedia*.. It has basic coverage of topics so is a good place to start.

On a computer with internet access enter the URL
<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia/>

Be sure to enter your search in the box labelled "Search Encyclopedia."



You may not always find exactly what you are looking for on the first try in general reference sources. Try using other words that describe your topic. For example, if you are looking up *genetically engineered food*, you may need to try *genetic engineering* to find what you need. Of course, if you are still having problems with finding information talk with a Reference Librarian

You will sometimes get several encyclopedia articles listed. Don't automatically assume the first one is the best. Try a couple of them at least.

For the one that is most useful, write the title of the article:

Read the article and summarize the information in your own words (2-3 sentences).

2. Finding Current Information

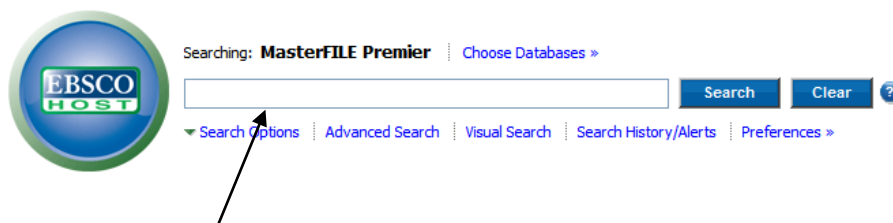
Ideas, laws, opinions, and events related to current issues and hot topics are constantly changing. When you are researching issues or topics in the news, it is important to find the most current information possible. One of the best sources for current information is a periodical article. Periodicals include magazines, journals and newspapers.

To find articles, you must use an online database called a periodical index. You use these indexes to search thousands of periodicals for articles on your topic. The index you will use includes the full text of the article so you can print the article from the computer or e-mail it.

Exercise 2. Using a periodical index

On a computer with internet access, go to the ACC library home page (<http://library.austincc.edu>). Put your click on **Articles & Research**, then click on **A-Z List of Resources**.

From the alphabetical list, scroll down the list of titles and then click on **MasterFile Premier**.



Type your topic into the search box. Then click the **search** button
Click on one of the articles in the result list.

What is the title of the article? _____

What is the date of the article? _____

What magazine or newspaper originally published this article? _____

Write the main idea of the article and one thing you learned from it.

Hint: If you are using a computer in the Library, click on the home button at the top of the window to return to the main Library homepage.



Finding Opinions on an Issue

Opinions or editorials on current issues appear in magazines, newspapers, books, television programs, and on the Internet. To find opinions on a topic, you can search a periodical index as we did in the previous exercise. Another good source for persuasive essays is the **At Issue** or the **Pro/Con** section of the **CQ Researcher**.

Exercise 3. Using CQ Researcher

The **CQ Researcher** is an information source that is published weekly and covers "hot topics" in the news. Each issue is devoted to one topic. It provides:

- an overview of a topic
- the history of an issue
- why the issue is newsworthy
- current statistics and facts
- persuasive essays on the issue



The libraries get **CQ Researcher** in both print and online versions.

- To locate a *print* copy of the **CQ Researcher** binder go to the library reference area. (The call number is **REF H35 .E35**) Ask the librarian if you have trouble locating it.
- Locate the index in the back of the binder and look up your topic. You may find more than one entry for your topic. Try to choose the issue of **CQ Researcher** with the most recent publication date.

| | Date | Page |
|---------------------------|----------|------|
| Riverboat gambling | | |
| Gambling Boom | 03/18/94 | 741 |
| Gambling Under Attack | 09/06/96 | 769 |
| "Road rage" | | |
| Aggressive Driving | 07/25/97 | 649 |
| Robotics | | |
| Artificial Intelligence | 11/14/97 | 985 |
| Space Program's Future | 04/25/97 | 361 |

For the online version of **CQ Researcher**:

- From the library's homepage, click on "Articles & Research," then click on "A-Z List of Resources."
- Click on **CQ Researcher**.
- When it opens, click in the "Quick Search" box and type your topic. If you can't find anything, try different keywords or ask the librarian for help.

For either the print or online version:

What is the title of the **CQ Researcher** on your topic? _____

What is the date of the **CQ Researcher** on your topic? _____

Locate the copy of the **CQ Researcher** you just listed. Read the cover page and summarize in your own words the issue being discussed:

Exercise 4: Persuasive essays

For the print version, locate the **At Issue** section of the **CQ Researcher** you are using. For the online version, click on the **Pro/Con** link for the report you're using. If you cannot locate these ask the librarian for help. Read the two persuasive essays and write down the question being addressed.

Which side of the argument do you agree with? _____ **yes** _____ **no**

Write down two points made in the essay that helped convince you to select the **yes** or **no** essay.

1. _____

2. _____

Congratulations! You've now completed the Writing Skills I assignment "Finding Information on Current Issues." Be sure to put your name and the date on the cover of the assignment.

**WRITING SKILLS I
LIBRARY ASSIGNMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Fill out this questionnaire after you have finished the Library Assignment and then give it to your teacher. Your teacher will send it to Frank Cronin at the Northridge Campus.

Please write complete detailed answers.

1. Was any part of the assignment confusing? If so, which part was confusing and why was it confusing?

2. In what ways was the assignment helpful? For instance, did it help you with your argument essay? If it did help, how did it help?

3. Was this assignment the first time that you

Used the computers in the library?_____

Used an online encyclopedia?_____

Used an online periodical index?_____

Read a *Congressional Quarterly Researcher*?_____