

Birkbeck Library

Finding and using information



Take a look at each stage of the suggested approach to finding information for your essays, assignments, dissertations and theses – for more effective searching and better results.

1. Plan.
2. Search.
3. Evaluate.
4. Use.

You can work through each section using the guidance in the Library and Information Skills Moodle Module which you can access from the homepage of the Library website.

1. Go to bbk.ac.uk/~JfUfm
2. Click on **Library & Information Skills Moodle Module** as shown below.

The screenshot shows the Birkbeck Library website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Birkbeck Library', 'About Birkbeck', 'Find us', and 'Contact us'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with tabs for 'Using the Library', 'Catalogue', 'eLibrary', 'Disability Support', 'Birkbeck Stratford', and 'Other libraries'. The main content area is titled 'Welcome to Birkbeck Library' and includes a search bar for the 'Library Catalogue' and a 'Quick EJournals Search' section. A large graphic on the right side of the page features a fan of colorful book covers and the text 'Resource Subject Guides' and 'Find out what the Library offers for your subject area - see the list of Library Resource Subject guides'. Below the main content is a grid of service links, including 'Opening Hours', 'Library Resources by Subject', 'Support for Staff Teaching and Research', 'Frequently Asked Questions - FASTRAQ', 'BIRDOs - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online', and 'Library & Information Skills Moodle module'. The 'Library & Information Skills Moodle module' link is circled in green. At the bottom of the page, there is a 'News and events' section with a 'CHAT WITH A LIBRARIAN' button and a 'Library Feedback' section.

1. Plan

Before you search for information, consider what it is that you want to find out about.

1. Unpack your question to identify the key concepts.
2. Pick out keywords that you will use in your search.
3. Map out your search strategy. You may find mind mapping a useful way to do this – using pen and paper, software on your computer, or an app on your mobile device.

Here is an example of mapping out your key concepts to start to pick out the keywords that you will use in your search.



2. Search

Make use of the best tools for the job. The following gives an overview of what tools are available and what they are good for. All these tools are available through the Library website: bbk.ac.uk/library

For guidance on how to use these tools, please see the **Library and Information Skills Moodle Module**.

Subject guides

Best for: finding out which are the best resources to use for finding information in your subject area.

When to use: Your subject guide can be the starting point for your research or a useful reminder of the **subject-specific tools** available.

Library catalogue

Best for: books, ebooks, print journals.

When to use: Finding books/ebooks on a reading list, finding books/ebooks on a particular topic.

Discover (articles and more)

Best for: books, ebooks, journal articles.

When to use: Great for searching across a wide range of resources; a good place to start your research for an essay or an assignment.

Find a known ejournal or ebook by title

Best for: If you already know the title of an ejournal or ebook. Search by the title of the ejournal or ebook.

When to use: When you want to see if we have access to a specific ebook or ejournal.

Databases

Best for: subject-specific journal articles, images, case studies, reviews, theses.

When to use: For more advanced searching for subject-specific, peer-reviewed articles or images for your essays, assignments, or dissertations.

Other libraries and interlibrary loans

Best for: Locating a wider range of subject-specific, specialist, rare or unusual resources.

When to use: If you need additional resources to those that you have found through Birkbeck Library, you can use the Interlibrary Loan Service: [bbk.ac.uk/library/borrowing-renewals-and fines](https://bbk.ac.uk/library/borrowing-renewals-and-fines)

Google Scholar

Best for: Locating resources, particularly journal articles, not held by Birkbeck.

When to use: If you need additional resources to those that you have found through Birkbeck Library: <https://scholar.google.co.uk>

3. Evaluate

Navigate and evaluate the results to ensure they help you address and answer your question. Consider the following when evaluating the information you have found to decide whether it is suitable to include in your work.

Factors to consider	Questions to ask yourself when evaluating information	Use it? Yes/No
Accuracy	Can you check the facts? Is there additional information such as data, tables, and references?	
Authority	Is the author a qualified professional in the field? Are they affiliated to a university or institution?	
Coverage	Is the subject covered in depth? Who is the intended audience – academics, students, the public?	
Currency	How up-to-date is the information?	
Evidence	Check the author’s references.	
Relevance	Is it what you need? Look at the introduction, abstract, or summary – what is it mainly about?	
Reliability	What methodology was used? Has it been peer-reviewed?	
Validity	Is it opinion, or arguments based on fact? Does it have a bias? What sources have been used?	

In addition, you can enhance your critical thinking skills by making use of the Academic Skills advice and guidance available: bbk.ac.uk/student-services/learning-development/how-we-can-help

4. Use

Make use of the information in your assignments, but make sure you **cite** and **reference** it correctly, to avoid plagiarism.

There are many different styles you can use to cite your references. In the first instance, check your course or module handbook for guidance on which style to use.

There is also a variety of referencing software that you could use: EndNote, Zotero, RefMe, Mendeley. These tools can be used to store, manage and organise your references. You can also cite in your document and build your bibliography.

For further guidance on citation and referencing, take a look at the **Library and Information Skills Moodle Module**.

Further help online

Using the Library

bbk.ac.uk/library/study-space-facilities

Further help face to face

- Participate in Library workshops. Topics include improving your search skills, and managing your references.
- Visit the Help Desk on Level 1 of the Library with your enquiry. It is staffed daily, no appointment necessary.
- For one-to-one guidance and advice on choosing and using the best tools for your search, make an appointment with your Subject Librarian:

bbk.ac.uk/library/subject-librarians

Full details can be found on the Library website: bbk.ac.uk/library



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overall student experience*.

* National Student Survey 2014