1. Getting started
Finding information
Using the initial plan that you created in Step 1 and the keywords that you identified in your assignment question, identify topic words that you can use in your search for information. You can start your research by putting these key words into or browsing search tools such as:

- The Library catalogue
- Databases
- E-journal indexes
- E-books
- Subject gateways
- Internet search engines

Too many results?
You will have to think about how you can refine your search. Revisit your keywords.

- Can you think of more specific words?
- Have you picked up any new words when doing your preliminary searching that you could use as a better alternative?
- Can you combine keywords to produce more specific and relevant results?
- Try using different Boolean operators (and, or, not):
  - ‘and’ means all search words must be included
  - ‘not’ means the search term must be excluded
  - ‘or’ means that one or both of the search terms will be included
- Try string searching: write your search phrase in quotation marks (“...”) to find specific phrases.

Too few results?
The reverse side of the problem. Maybe you are being too specific and have to broaden out a bit.

- Revisit your initial plan to see if there are any alternative words you can use.
- If this doesn’t work try another source.

Tip: Always take a look at any “Help” screens available to you when using electronic databases. Most databases rely on you typing in keywords to retrieve a set of results but they will not all operate in the same way. The way that you express Boolean operators will vary from one database to another.

2. Using the library
Types of information
When you research your assignment, you will need to decide what type of information you need to find. Probably you will already be familiar with looking
for factual information or statistics to provide evidence to back up your argument but you also need to consider the following:

- **Scholarly v General Interest**: At university you need to base your work on scholarly, academic information (such as textbooks and journal articles) rather than general information (such as Wikipedia or newspapers).
- **Information on organisational websites or government websites**: For official publications that you may have been asked to discuss or critique.
- **Current v historical**: Are you examining current research or historical facts? Will you need to find primary or secondary sources?
- **Primary v secondary sources**.
  - **Primary sources** could be considered as "original" or "firsthand" sources. Journal articles, reports and conference papers which present the results of original research are termed primary literature whether they’re in print or electronic format.
  - **Secondary sources** interpret, analyse or repackage primary material. Examples of secondary sources are textbooks and review articles. These aim to summarise and explain previously published work rather than present the results of original work.
  - Abstracts, indexes, and databases are also secondary sources. These are used to identify relevant primary and secondary literature.

Your tutor will tell you what type of information you should focus on if you are not sure. It is also useful to look at a range of sources of information; for example:

- Print and online journals (accessed via indexing and abstract services)
- Published dissertations and theses
- Video, DVD and CD ROM collections
- eBooks and special library collections.

**Library links**

Both the Templeman and Drill Hall Library homepages contain links to a range of print and electronic resources. Browse each library homepage or use the links in Step 2: Assignment Survival Kit to access library resources.

- Templeman Library: http://www.kent.ac.uk/library/
- Drill Hall Library: http://campus.medway.ac.uk/library/index.php

**Getting help**

Help is available for you in finding information, using the library and developing your study skills. Use the links in Step 2: Assignment Survival Kit to find library and study support or email:
3. Reading and note-making For the full information on reading and taking notes, download the Reading and Note-Making Guide from Step 2: Assignment Survival Kit.

Have a clear purpose in mind before you start your reading and be organised: this means developing an overview of your topic before looking at more detailed information. Start by reading any text books recommended in your module handbook or by your tutor to get an idea of the main issues before you research specific topics. It also means having a strategy to deal with difficult and complex readings.

4. Avoiding plagiarism (for more information download the Avoiding Plagiarism Guide)

Plagiarism-proof notes

What is plagiarism? Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct. Using another person’s work in a way which may mislead or deceive your reader is plagiarism, whether you deliberately intend to deceive or not.

- If you use another person's ideas or words and pretend that it is all your own work, you are plagiarising that other person's work.
- This is a serious offence at any university and can result in disciplinary action against you by your department or even expulsion.
- You may also have a note kept on your official University academic record which may be sent to a potential employer.
- You can find out more about the University of Kent's academic policies and procedures at the Academic Policies page of the Academic Integrity website.

How do I avoid plagiarism? Good referencing and acknowledging all the sources you have used in completing your assignment will show that you have not plagiarised another person’s work.

This means that you must be able to identify in your notes the exact words you have taken from a source (a quotation) PLUS any ideas, arguments and information which you have taken from a source but written in your own words (a paraphrase or summary).

- Plan your assignment so that you have time to complete the work yourself without needing to copy text from other sources.
- Become familiar with the referencing style used in your subject area, the type of material you need to reference for your subject (for example,
drawings, music, computer code or dance) and any other subject specific aspects to referencing in each assignment you complete.

- Use the Academic Integrity: Working with Text-Based Sources page to find information and useful links to help your develop your writing and referencing skills.

Referencing your work

What is referencing? When you write your assignment, you must be able to reference or acknowledge your sources. This means being able to identify and reference the original author of the ideas, information and quotations that you use. Regardless of the referencing style you need to use, you will need to:

- cite the source the body of your assignment (in-text referencing or citation) PLUS
- write a full list of references at the end of your work which includes bibliographical details for each of your in-text references.

Material which you must reference or acknowledge includes but is not limited to:

- exact words (written or spoken) *Note that exact words must be placed in quotation marks or indented depending on the referencing style you use.
- summarised or paraphrased text
- data
- images (graph, tables, video, multimedia etc), pictures or illustrations
- ideas or concepts, theories, opinion or analysis
- music or other performance media
- computer code
- designs, drawings or plans

In general, common knowledge or facts widely available in a number of sources do not need to be acknowledged; however, what constitutes common knowledge and facts varies across subject areas. Check with your lecturer.

More information about referencing at the University of Kent can be found at:

- Academic Integrity: Referencing Style Guides
- Templeman Library reference management software
- the Useful Links on referencing and avoiding plagiarism section of the Academic Integrity: Guide for Students.

Useful references
