

Research Essentials

*Workbook*

## Unit 2: Gathering Information

TOWES - Test of Workplace Essential Skills

**TOWES**

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Unit 4 – Page 7 Cartoon Shaun McCallig ID smgn64

## TOWES Research Essentials

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This project/resource was funded by the Alberta Open Educational Resources (AEOER) Initiative, which is made possible through an investment from the Alberta government.



## How to use this eWorkbook:

This workbook is meant to guide learners in a step by step method to attaining the stated learning outcome listed on the first page. Print this workbook out and write notes in the margins. Fill in the learning activities using a pencil to allow for mistakes and brainstorming during your learning process.

You may choose to complete this workbook on your own, but it may be helpful to locate a mentor or trusted friend or advisor to give you feedback on your completed learning activities.

Make sure to explain or summarize the main concept of the unit and the purpose of each learning activity to your mentor before you ask for feedback. The purpose of this collaboration is NOT for your mentor to tell you that something is right or wrong, but rather just to give you some constructive and objective feedback that may allow you to look at things in a new way or from a different perspective. Chances are that if you can clearly explain the concepts of the unit and your mentor understands what you have completed in your learning activities - you are on the right track.

Essentially, you have the final say on how you complete your learning activities, and how you use the templates provided in this course, but generally a good rule of thumb is that two heads are always better than one! If you are having difficulties working on your own, ask someone for help or feedback.



**Step 1:** Read the entire workbook.



**Step 2:** Complete the learning activities.



**Step 3:** Ask for feedback on learning activities from a mentor or trusted advisor.



**Step 4:** Use the templates for school, home, or work situations.



## The Story: David's Pasta Investigation

Welcome to Unit 2 of the Research Essentials Learning Series. Meet David. This is his continued story about how David wanted to do a small informal research project investigating and researching various types and cooking methods of the best Gluten-Free Pasta available in Canada. As previously mentioned, David is a chef who works at a small café that specializes in gluten free menu options. He wants to offer his customers the best tasting pasta available and hopes that they would not be able to taste the difference between the regular pasta dishes and the gluten free options.

In the last unit David came up with his research question, which was:

“How do various cooking methods, temperatures, and water/salt saturations impact taste, texture and consistency of popular Canadian brands of Gluten Free Pasta?”

David now is in the process of gathering the information for his research and will investigate his research question using various sources. He plans on conducting a few surveys and interviews with his customers and plans to compile his completed research and findings into a written article for a local food magazine. He is trying to learn more about gathering information and some good rules of thumb for using primary and secondary sources of information before he gathers information for his research project. David has never really conducted a survey with anyone and is curious about how to approach writing survey questions or how to go about information gathering for informal research. He is hoping that the information he gathers will be useful to helping him make a good business decision for his restaurant.

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## Unit 2: Gathering Information

**Q:** *Why is it important for me to learn this material?*

Gathering information is an important part of the research process. Your research project is only as good as the reliability and credibility of the sources of information you use.

**Q:** *How long will it take me to complete this workbook?*

It should take learners about 2 hours to complete this unit.

### Learning Outcome

*When you complete this unit you will be able to...*

Differentiate between facts and opinions and develop informal research strategies for accessing primary and secondary information sources with appropriate copyright citation.

### Learning Objectives

*Unit 2 focuses on the following Objectives:*

1. Explain the difference between a fact and opinion and why information literacy is important at home, at school or in the workplace.
2. Characterize what a credible source is for both primary and secondary information.
3. Outline useful research strategies to help you collect data for informal research projects.

### Learning Activities

*Please complete the following learning activities:*

- Learning Activity 1: Fact or Opinion
- Learning Activity 2: Credible or not?
- Learning Activity 3: Create a Survey



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# OBJECTIVE ONE

*When you complete this objective you will be able to...*

Explain the difference between a fact and opinion and why information literacy is important at home, at school or in the workplace.

## Learning Material

Information literacy is becoming increasingly important in today's world in all aspects of home, school and work environments. With rapid technology changes and an increase in the amount of information resources available on the Internet, in libraries and various media publications, people are faced with an overwhelming amount of information choices. Information and data is available to us in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability.

### What is information literacy?

Information literacy sounds like a fancy and complex word, but it is quite simple to understand. Basically information literacy can be defined as a set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use the needed information in an effective and ethical way." The skills associated with information literacy are when a person has the ability to<sup>1</sup>:

	Determine the nature and extent of information needed
	Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
	Evaluate information and its sources critically
	Incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system
	Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose and uses the information ethically and legally

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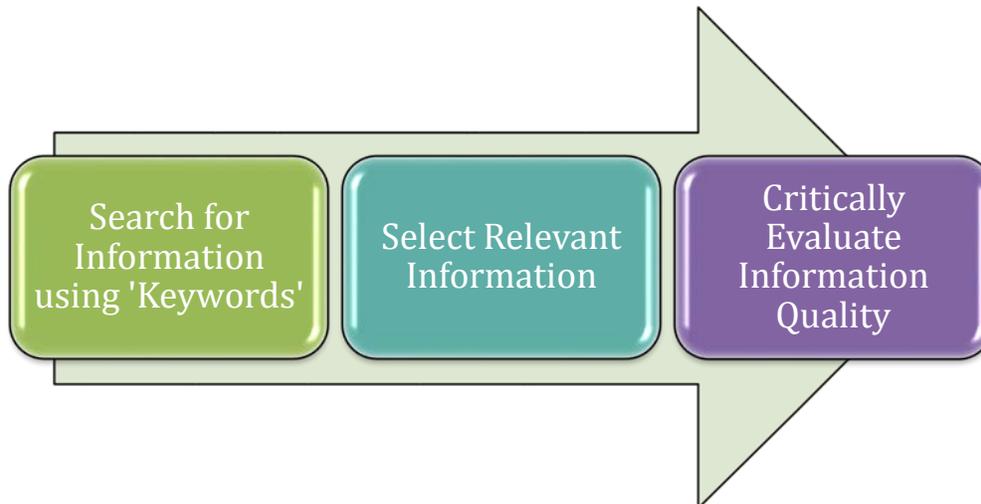
Adapted from American Library Association. Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Final Report. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1989.)

Developing your own information literacy will not happen over night and is a skill that all people will develop over a life time of exploration, learning, and experience. The first step to having a high level of information literacy is to obtain a clear understanding of the specific skills that are required (listed in the checklist above) so that you can be aware of your own abilities and how you think of and use information. The careful practice of being deliberate about how you use information, and what types of questions you are asking yourself to ensure that the information you are gathering for your projects is credible and valid is critical not only to your own information literacy, but to the credibility and end result of everything you choose to research.

### Where do people typically find information?

- Books & e-books
- Academic Journals & e-journals
- Newspapers & Magazines
- Government documents
- Video Recordings
- Audio Recordings

### A Typical Searching Process Includes:



### Typical Searches use Keywords:

It is important to know about the two different types of keywords: broad keywords and long-tail keywords.

- **Broad keywords** are general short words or phrases that, while they may apply to your own topic or specialty, they might also apply to many related topics or might even be general enough to be relevant to multiple topics.
- **Long-tail keywords** tend to be longer and more specific words or phrases that are more precisely related to your topic.

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Let's look at some examples of Keywords that David (see unit case study) might use to search information on his research topic:

<b>Broad Keywords:</b>	<b>Long Tail Keywords:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pasta</li><li>• Pasta Recipes</li><li>• Italian Cuisine</li><li>• Cooking Pasta</li><li>• Pasta Brands</li><li>• Types of Pasta</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gluten-free Pasta</li><li>• Delicious gluten-free Pasta Recipes</li><li>• Cooking methods for gluten free pastas</li><li>• Best Gluten Free Pasta Brands</li><li>• Strategies for El Dante gluten-free pasta</li></ul>

Remember when trying to think of Keywords do the following:

	Use nouns and unique words
	Put the main words first
	Use multiple terms when possible

A list of various Types of **information**:

<p><b>Books &amp; e-books</b></p>	<p><i>Books</i> help us to find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive and detailed information on a topic</li> <li>• Historical background or context</li> <li>• Other important issues related to your topic</li> <li>• Research to support an argument</li> <li>• Relaxation, entertainment, and enjoyment</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples may include but are not limited to:</b> Academic Textbooks, Fiction, Non-Fiction, Biographies, Travel Books, Cook Books, Children’s Books, Poetry Books, etc.</p>
<p><b>Journals &amp; e-journals</b></p>	<p><i>Journals</i> are a collection of articles usually written by scholars in an academic or professional field and they help us to find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarly research (Formal Research Studies) relevant to a very specific topic or area of study</li> <li>• Bibliographies that point to other relevant research</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples may include but are not limited to:</b> Canadian Journal of Public Health, Canadian Journal of Microbiology, Canadian Journal of Diabetes, etc.</p>
<p><b>Newspapers &amp; Magazines</b></p>	<p><i>Newspapers &amp; Magazines</i> help us to find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current information about international, national and local events</li> <li>• Expert or popular opinions about popular culture</li> <li>• General articles about a topic</li> </ul> <p><b>Newspaper Examples may include but are not limited to:</b> The Globe and Mail, The National Post, or The Calgary Herald, etc.</p> <p><b>Magazine Examples may include but are not limited to:</b> Vogue Magazine, Time Magazine, Chatelaine Magazine, and MacLean’s Magazine, etc.</p>
<p><b>Government Documents</b></p>	<p><i>Government Documents</i> are official publications produced by any government agency. Publications are issued by the government in the course of its work and are often mandated by law and help us to find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed information on laws, social programs, regulations, various government reports or activities</li> <li>• Statistical data on population, taxes and spending, economics, health, environmental issues, immigration, or weather</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples may include but are not limited to:</b> Statistics on population currently living in Canada, various reports or information found on the Canadian Government website: <a href="http://www.canada.ca/en/">http://www.canada.ca/en/</a></p>

Adapted from: Stanford’s Key to Information Literacy. Retrieved on November 20, 2015 at <http://skil.stanford.edu/intro/index.html>

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## What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?

That brings us to our next topic. One of the first steps to critically evaluating information is to clearly understand the difference between facts versus opinions. Selecting appropriate resources is part of the research process. It is important to clearly understand how to use facts and opinions within your research.

- A **fact** is a statement that can be proven true or false. Facts are unbiased and descriptive to reality.
- An **opinion** is an expression of a person's feelings, emotions, or ideas that cannot be proven. Opinions are usually biased towards the person's own experiences and personal preferences.

Writers often use 'facts' to help support their own opinions, so it is important to be aware that there are likely positive and negative facts for both sides of an argument or problem. When conducting research on any topic it is best to try to be unbiased and provide both the pros and cons of your research topic. When you show favoritism for something or you show only that you are against one thing, person, or group compared with another, it is considered to be an unfair or **biased** opinion. Research is best practiced with the idea that you only want to find out the most truthful and factual answer to your research question, rather than having a pre-determined answer in your head as to what you hope or want the results to be.

Let's look at an example of facts versus opinions:

- Facts usually contain statistics
- Facts do not use emotional language
- Opinions usually use emotional language
- Opinions often speculate as to what might happen

See the examples of sentences showing Facts vs Opinions below. If it is an opinion, note any judgment words in the sentence. Judgment words are words such as *better*, *expensive*, *beautiful* and other words that can be interpreted many different ways. Judgment words usually indicate an opinion.

<b>Facts:</b>	<b>Opinions:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Canada has 10 Provinces and 3 Territories</li><li>• Ostriches can run faster than horses</li><li>• Apple and pear seeds contain arsenic, which may be deadly to dogs.</li><li>• A human heart beats around 100,000 times every day or about 30 million times in a year.</li><li>• The provinces and territories of Canada combine to make up the world's second-largest country by area.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children should not be allowed to watch more than five hours of television per week.</li><li>• Tiger Woods will win the Master's next year.</li><li>• French is an easy language to learn if you already speak Spanish.</li><li>• College students who play sports often have higher grades than students who do not exercise.</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is estimated that 83% of Americans who have celiac disease are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed with other conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Rocky Mountains are a beautiful place to visit in the winter.</li> </ul>
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Now that you can differentiate between facts versus opinions on a sentence-by-sentence basis, let's look at a body of writing.

**Example of Facts vs. Opinions in a body of writing:**

It is unfortunate that<sup>1</sup> human use of fossil fuels has been one of the most significant developments of the past few centuries. In today's world people rely on fossil fuels, a non-renewable energy resource, for more than 90 percent of their energy needs.<sup>2</sup> This careless misuse of our planet's resources has resulted in pollution, global warming, and the destruction of fragile ecosystems.<sup>3</sup> Oil pipelines carry more than approximately one million barrels of oil each day<sup>4</sup> across fragile and sensitive tundra regions and have the potential to destroy the precious environment. Transporting oil across such areas can only result in oil spills that poison the land for decades.<sup>5</sup>

1. **Opinion:** Emotional language used here, facts do not specify that something is unfortunate, this shows an opinion "against" something.
2. **Fact:** this statement is factual and unbiased; it contains statistical data and is a non-emotional statement.
3. **Opinion:** The emotional language implies that there are careless behaviors and a misuse of resources, which show a negative opinion of the topic.
4. **Fact:** This statement is a fact as it just states the facts about how many barrels are transported across pipelines each day.
5. **Opinion:** The phrases "fragile and sensitive" and "potential to destroy" use emotional language to show speculation as to what might happen and are an opinion rather than a fact.

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## Learning Activity 1: Facts vs. Opinions

*Complete the Learning Activity listed below...*



In the writing excerpts below, identify the facts from the opinions. Circle or use a highlighter to highlight the sentences below that are considered *FACTS*...

### **Example 1:**

In today's world most people have cellphones, and for some people this may be a bad thing because people with addictive personalities can become addicted to their cell phones. The fear of having no cell phone signal or being unable to make or receive cell phone calls is called Nomophobia. Cell phone use in schools and classrooms should be banned because it's an addictive and destructive habit. Students might not pay attention to what is being taught in the class because they would be more focused on texting their friends. According to a recent study, over 9 trillion text messages were sent in 2013, which equates to about 1,200 text messages per person on the planet per year. Even though Apple's iPhone generally receives the most publicity, 88.3% of all mobile phones in use worldwide are not iPhones according to Business Insider on August 15, 2014.

It is likely that the schools or classrooms that ban students from having cellphones during classes will result in higher grades for the students. The world would be a more focused and productive place if it wasn't for the temptation and distraction of cell phones and texting.

### **Example 2:**

Whether you are a dog lover or a cat lover, both types of animals make amazing pets and companions for humans of all ages. Humans have kept dogs as pets for over 12,000 years. Every dog on earth is descended from a species known as the Tomarctus – a creature that roamed the earth over 15 million years ago. The largest breed of dog is the Irish Wolfhound, and the smallest dog breed is the Chihuahua. Dogs live 15 years on average. People need the presence of a cat or dog in their lives in order to be happy. The world would be a sad and lonely place without cats or dogs.

In contrast to dogs, cats have not undergone major changes during their domestication process. A cat lover is called an Ailurophilia. On average, cats spend 2/3 of every day sleeping. That means a nine-year-old cat has been awake for only three years of its life. It is very therapeutic for people to own cats or dogs and can probably help to eliminate depression and loneliness. The life expectancy of a cat is typically 12 to 15 years. There is nothing more adorable than having a purring cat sitting on your lap or an adoring dog waiting

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for a scratch behind the ears. Cats and dogs make loyal and loving friends and will ensure you feel loved, appreciated, happy, and needed.

**Example 3:**

Unfortunately, many people like to listen to music when they study, do their homework or do thinking tasks without realizing the potential harmful effects of such a negative practice. Music is distracting and interrupts the thought process rather than helping it. A study conducted by Smith and Morris (1977) addressed this question by studying the effects of calm music versus active and high-energy music on student success. The study focused on the influence these two distinct genres of music have on performance, anxiety, and concentration. Participants had to indicate their preferred type of music and were requested to repeat a set of numbers backwards while listening to the high-energy music, the calm music, or no music at all. The results indicated that participants performed worse while listening to their preferred type of music whether it was calm or high-energy, where as in the “no music” scenario the participants performed best.

Any type of music is distracting when one is engaged in a task that requires deep thinking probably because the attention is drawn to the lyrics, emotions, and memories that music can evoke in the listeners. Even though it is a common practice to listen to music while working or thinking, people are probably better off having no music playing at all.

**Please Note:** Check your answers using the ‘Answer Key’ located at the end of the workbook

References for Written Examples:

- <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2014/10/15-fascinating-cell-phone-related-facts-probably-didnt-know/>
- <http://facts.randomhistory.com/interesting-facts-about-cats.html>
- <http://www.cesar.com/live-the-life/just-for-fun/100-weird-facts-about-dogs.aspx>
- <http://www.studentpulse.com/articles/762/the-impact-of-listening-to-music-on-cognitive-performance>

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## OBJECTIVE TWO

*When you complete this objective you will be able to...*

Describe the difference between primary and secondary sources of information and basic criteria for determining credible sources.

### Learning Material

#### Primary vs. Secondary Sources of Information

When conducting research of your own you should be aware of the two types of information classified as either Primary and Secondary sources.

Primary information sources can be defined as the original document from the researcher conducting the experiments, interviews or eyewitness accounts. For example let's look to David in our case study (mentioned at the beginning of this unit). If David decided to conduct taste tests surveys with customers in his restaurant to find out which type of pasta tastes better, the customer surveys would be considered a Primary Source of information.

#### Primary Source are:

- A work created at the time of an event or by a person who directly experienced an event
- A document or record containing first-hand information or "original data" on a topic.

**Examples include:** interviews, surveys, diaries, letters, journals, original hand-written manuscripts, newspapers, audio interviews, magazine clippings, government documents, etc.

Secondary sources of information can be defined as all other sources of information that was not directly experienced or observed by the researcher and is based on analyzing, critiquing or referring to the a primary source of information. For example, if David decides to use various reviews or articles published in cooking magazines about the best types of gluten-free pastas the magazine articles that would be considered a secondary source of information.

#### Secondary Sources are:

- A source that is one step removed from the original event or experience

- Any published or unpublished work that is one step removed from the original source, usually describing, summarizing, analyzing, evaluating, derived from other peoples research, or is “based on” primary source materials
- A source that provides criticism or interpretation of a primary source.

**Examples include:** textbooks, review articles, biographies, historical films, music and art, articles about people and events from the past.<sup>3</sup>

Depending on the type of research project you are doing both types of information sources are acceptable. However, Primary sources of information in research projects are usually considered better than secondary sources because the research is based on the original source rather than an “interpretation” of a primary source.

## Quality Sources of Information

A good way to ensure quality in your sources is by using the C.A.R.S checklist. Using this checklist can give you some good questions to ask yourself in order to determine whether or not a source of information is of a higher quality.

 <b>C</b> redible?	<p><b>Is the source credible?</b></p> <p>Is the source of information trustworthy? Why?</p> <p>What is the quality of evidence and argument?          What are the author’s credentials relevant to the topic?          Is there evidence of quality controls, known or respected authorities or experts associated with the writing, and organizational support relevant to the topic?</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> an authoritative source of information that supplies verifiable evidence that allows you to trust what you are reading.</p>
 <b>A</b> ccurate?	<p><b>Is the source Accurate?</b></p> <p>Is the information up-to-date, factual; are the statistics correct?          How do you know?</p> <p>Is the information detailed enough to properly explore the topic?          Was the information exact, precise, and comprehensive?          Is the information complete and truthful?</p>

	<p><b>What to look for:</b> a source that is current and whether or not it's a source that gives the whole unbiased truth.</p>
 <b>R</b> easonable?	<p><b>Is the source Reasonable?</b></p> <p>Is the information fair?          Is the information balanced to both sides of a problem or argument?          Is the information objective, reasoned, with no conflict of interest, and no unbiased emotional language and opinions?</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> a source that engages the subject thoughtfully and reasonably; a source concerned with the truth rather than trying to sway a reader to have a specific opinion.</p>
 <b>S</b> upported?	<p><b>Is the source's claims or arguments Supported?</b></p> <p>Does the information provide sources?          Are the claims made in the research supported, and documented?</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> a source that provides convincing evidence for the claims made; and sources you can verify.</p>

Adapted from: Harris, Robert. Evaluating Internet Research Sources. Retrieved on November 22, 2015 from <http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>



**Professor E says...** Remember it is okay to be skeptical when looking at information. Actually it is better to be on the skeptical side. Don't believe everything you read without considering where the information came from. File away new information in your mind rather than immediately believing or disbelieving it. Do not jump to a conclusions or come to a decision too quickly. Don't worry about believing or disbelieving a claim right away, wait until more information comes in, take time to think about the issue(s), and gain more general knowledge before making your decision.



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## Learning Activity 2: Evaluate Information Sources



*Complete the Learning Activity listed below...*

1. Find 3 *different* types of resources or sources of information that are relevant to your specific research question. The resource can be any of the following:

- Books & e-books
- Academic Journals & e-journals
- Newspapers & Magazines
- Government documents
- Video Recordings
- Audio Recordings

2. Validate the sources using the C.A.R.S checklist. Explain *why* you think each source is credible, accurate, reasonable and supported?

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# OBJECTIVE THREE

*When you complete this objective you will be able to...*

List various Informal Research Approaches that can help you to gather information.

## Learning Material

When conducting informal research you do not have to use a complex “methodology” that formal research projects, scientific studies, professional researchers and scholars are *required* to use. In informal research you can design any method or approach that you think will help you to answer or solve your research question. However, it is important to recognize that the informal method or approach used for your project should be somewhat structured and organized in a logical way. Making a clear distinction between opinion, facts and being free of biases will help your project and research to be perceived as credible.



Here are some good rules of thumb or strategies to use within any informal research project for home, work, or school scenarios.

### 1. Use Credible Sources

If you want to use primary or secondary sources in your informal research project, it is best to use credible sources that meet the C.A.R.S criteria (Credible, Accurate, Reasonable, Supported). If a specific resource that you want to use in your project does NOT meet these basic criteria, you may want to think twice about using it as the basis for your research. If you are going to put the effort into exploring a research question or problem, why not base your decisions and findings on credible sources? It will only make your own project better and more professional.

### 2. Conduct Informal Surveys

A well-designed informal survey can act as a primary source of information for understanding and identifying the needs, opinions and experiences of a group of people. Assessing the views and opinions of others about relevant topics to your research question or project can help to inform future decisions and planning.

A survey begins with a set of well-formulated questions. Each survey respondent should answer the questions independently. The responses from ALL the survey participants (also called respondents) will make up the “survey results”, which should be analyzed and presented by the researcher with appropriate visuals, charts or written explanations. You can run your survey via an online survey tool

where you email the survey out to people. You can also do it the old fashioned way with a written survey where you give respondents the survey printed on a piece of paper and get them to fill in the answers by hand. Whether you choose to conduct online or written surveys, here are some basic guidelines to follow when creating survey questions:

	<p>Survey questions should be short, specific and directly related to your research topic so that respondents can quickly and easily understand what you are asking them.</p>
	<p>Keep the language of the survey questions simple and use plain and simple wording. Avoid complex and lengthy questions and words that may be open to interpretation by the reader.</p>
<p>1 </p> <p>2 </p> <p>3 </p>	<p>Ask one survey question at a time. Do not use compound questions. For example, do not ask ‘What do you think of the pasta’s taste and texture?’ Instead ask separate questions about the taste and then another question about the pasta’s texture. You should not exceed more than 25 questions in an informal survey and the survey should not take more than 10 minutes for a respondent to complete.</p>
	<p>Do not ask “leading” survey questions (i.e. questions that hint at specific positive or negative responses). For example, do not ask ‘Do you agree that the pasta is delicious?’ Instead, ask ‘How would you rate the taste of the pasta dish?’ and provide a rating scale. This keeps the questions unbiased and objective without leading them to answer positively or negatively.</p>
	<p>The best kinds of survey questions to use are “closed questions” (which can be answered yes/no or by choosing from a limited list of choices). This is because it is easier for the researcher to quantify and analyze the results of closed questions due to the black and white nature of the answers. It is best to provide no more than 4 to 5 choices for the possible answers in any closed question surveys. More options can overwhelm the respondents.</p>
	<p>Keep in mind that open-ended survey questions (questions that require the respondent to compose a written answer and explanation as to ‘why’ they feel a certain way) require a lot more work for the researcher to analyze and interpret, and are best left for use in other informal research methods such as personal interviews.</p>

### 3. Conduct Interviews

Interviews are different from questionnaires or surveys because they involve direct interaction between an interviewer and a participant. Interviews are typically done in person or through a conversation. Researchers can ask different types of questions that will give the interviewer different types of data. For example, closed questions provide people with a fixed set of responses, whereas open questions allow people to express what they think in their own words. Interviews might be very informal or in other instances they will want to be more structured and formal. Usually interviews are either *structured* or *unstructured*.

**Structured Interviews** are also known as formal interviews (more like a job interview). The questions are asked in a specific order and the interviewer will not deviate from the list of set questions or encourage exploration beyond the answers that are given by the respondents. These types of interviews are usually based on structured or closed-ended questions that can be answered yes/no or by choosing from a limited list of choices.

**Unstructured Interviews** are sometimes referred to as 'discovery interviews' and are more like a 'guided conversation' centered on a specific topic than a strict structured interview. They are sometimes called informal interviews. A set of predetermined questions might not be used, and even if one is used, they will contain open-ended questions that can be asked in any order. Keeping in mind that it is similar to more of a focused casual conversation where some questions might be added or missed as the discussion progresses.

- ✓ Unstructured interviews can be done informally, and 'on the fly' and, therefore, do not require scheduling time with respondents. Respondents may actually see it as simply a 'conversation.'
- ✓ Informal interviews usually feel like 'low pressure' interactions and will likely allow the respondents to speak more freely and openly.
- ✓ Informal interviews can provide a good foundation for exploring or probing a specific topic and may be used as a basis for conducting more structured interviews in the future depending upon what you find out.

### 4. Ask the Right Questions

Asking the right questions can help increase the quality of information that you get. Whether you are conducting a survey, or an interview asking the right questions is a critical part of conducting research. When asking questions make sure to:

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- ✓ **Plan your questions beforehand.** Outline your information goals and organize or group related questions together. Think about a logical order or flow to your questions to support your research purpose.
  - ✓ **Know your purpose.** Every question you ask should be related to your research topic and should be helping you to gather either facts or an opinion. Know what type of information you need to best help answer your research problem and create your questions accordingly.
  - ✓ **Start with general questions end with specific ones.** Start with the broader big picture questions and then gradually drill down to specific questions.
  - ✓ **Ask about one thing at a time.** Make sure to write short and to the point questions, each question should cover a single point. If you want to know two different things, then it is better to ask two different questions.
  - ✓ **Ask essential questions.** Respect the participant's time and if the question is not directly relevant to important to your research don't waste your time or the time of your respondent.
  - ✓ **Listen.** Don't interrupt. Make sure to carefully listen to the complete answer for each question you ask. Remember that the key to good questioning is the willingness to really listen to the answers. The whole purpose of an interview (or survey) is to hear or observe the information provided to you by the respondents.

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## Learning Activity 3: Create an Informal Survey



### *Please Note:*

Make sure each survey question is relevant and useful to your research topic or question...

*Complete the Learning Activity listed below...*

### 1. Create a list of Survey questions

Make a list of 5 multiple choice survey questions that are relevant to your research topic. Each question must have 4 options to choose from.

Question 1: List question here...

- a) Possible answer:
- b) Possible answer:
- c) Possible answer:
- d) Possible answer:

Question 2: List question here...

- a) Possible answer:
- b) Possible answer:
- c) Possible answer:
- d) Possible answer:

Question 3: List question here...

- a) Possible answer:
- b) Possible answer:
- c) Possible answer:
- d) Possible answer:

Question 4: List question here...

- a) Possible answer:
- b) Possible answer:
- c) Possible answer:
- d) Possible answer:

Question 5: List question here...

- a) Possible answer:
- b) Possible answer:
- c) Possible answer:
- d) Possible answer:

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## 2. Create a Survey & Summarize Results

Sign up for a free account and create an electronic survey on Survey Monkey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

- ✓ Use the questions you created in step 1
- ✓ Send survey out to 3 or 4 people
- ✓ Gather results and summarize into a chart.

Example of Summary Chart:

Participant	Answer for Question 1:	Answer for Question 2:	Answer for Question 3:	Answer for Question 4:
#1	a	b	a	b
#2	a	b	c	b
#3	b	b	b	b
#4	a	c	a	b

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## Unit 2: Building Vocabulary



### Directions:

- Read the list of the terms below
- Use either Google, or an online dictionary, to define each word.
- On a piece of paper, write down the meaning of the word in English
- If English is NOT your first language translate it into your native language using an online translator tool such as <https://www.babelfish.com/>
- Do this for each word listed below

1. Formal
2. Structured
3. Unstructured
4. Source
5. Credible
6. Probe
7. Formal
8. Informal
9. Respondent
10. Deviate
11. Quantitative
12. Qualitative
13. Accurate
14. Fact
15. Opinion
16. Conduct
17. Interview
18. Options
19. Variables
20. Leading Questions
21. Biased
22. Plagiarism
23. Citation
24. Reference



## Learning Activity 1 Answers:

Facts are highlighted below...

### Example 1:

In today's world most people have cellphones, and for some people this may be a bad thing because people with addictive personalities can become addicted to their cell phones. The fear of having no cell phone signal or being unable to make or receive cell phone calls is called Nomophobia. Cell phone use in schools and classrooms should be banned because it's an addictive and destructive habit. Students might not pay attention to what is being taught in the class because they would be more focused on texting their friends. According to a recent study, over 9 trillion text messages were sent in 2013, which equates to about 1,200 text messages per person on the planet per year. Even though Apple's iPhone generally receives the most publicity, 88.3% of all mobile phones in use worldwide are not iPhones according to Business Insider on August 15, 2014.

It is likely that the schools or classrooms that ban students from having cellphones during classes will result in higher grades for the students. The world would be a more focused and productive place if it wasn't for the temptation and distraction of cell phones and texting.

### Example 2:

Whether you are a dog lover or a cat lover, both types of animals make amazing pets and companions for humans of all ages. Humans have kept dogs as pets for over 12,000 years. Every dog on earth is descended from a species known as the Tomarctus – a creature that roamed the earth over 15 million years ago. The largest breed of dog is the Irish Wolfhound, and the smallest dog breed is the Chihuahua. Dogs live 15 years on average. People need the presence of a cat or dog in their lives in order to be happy. The world would be a sad and lonely place without cats or dogs.

In contrast to dogs, cats have not undergone major changes during their domestication process. A cat lover is called an Ailurophilia. On average, cats spend 2/3 of every day sleeping. That means a nine-year-old cat has been awake for only three years of its life. It is very therapeutic for people to own cats or dogs and can probably help to eliminate depression and loneliness. The life expectancy of a cat is typically 12 to 15 years. There is nothing more adorable than having a purring cat sitting on your lap or an adoring dog waiting for a scratch behind the ears. Cats and dogs make loyal and loving friends and

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will ensure you feel loved, appreciated, happy, and needed.

**Example 3:**

Unfortunately, many people like to listen to music when they study, do their homework or do thinking tasks without realizing the potential harmful effects of such a negative practice. Music is distracting and interrupts the thought process rather than helping it. A study conducted by Smith and Morris (1977) addressed this question by studying the effects of calm music versus active and high-energy music on student success. The study focused on the influence these two distinct genres of music have on performance, anxiety, and concentration. Participants had to indicate their preferred type of music and were requested to repeat a set of numbers backwards while listening to the high-energy music, the calm music, or no music at all. The results indicated that participants performed worse while listening to their preferred type of music whether it was calm or high-energy, where as in the “no music” scenario the participants performed best.

Any type of music is distracting when one is engaged in a task that requires deep thinking probably because the attention is drawn to the lyrics, emotions, and memories that music can evoke in the listeners. Even though it is a common practice to listen to music while working or thinking, people are probably better off having no music playing at all.

References for Written Examples:

<http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2014/10/15-fascinating-cell-phone-related-facts-probably-didnt-know/>  
<http://facts.randomhistory.com/interesting-facts-about-cats.html>  
<http://www.cesar.com/live-the-life/just-for-fun/100-weird-facts-about-dogs.aspx>  
<http://www.studentpulse.com/articles/762/the-impact-of-listening-to-music-on-cognitive-performance>

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## References

### Fact References:

- <http://www.medindia.net/facts/>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provinces\\_and\\_territories\\_of\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provinces_and_territories_of_Canada)
- <http://www.thefactsite.com/2010/09/300-random-animal-facts.html>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/factsheet/en06opin-11-f-what-is-fact-and-opinion>

### Primary vs Secondary Sources:

- <http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/tips/primvsec/index.php>
- <https://www.aims.edu/student/online-writing-lab/sources/primary-vs-secondary>
- Harris, Robert. Evaluating Internet Research Sources. Retrieved on November 22, 2015 from <http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>

### Keywords:

- <http://knowledge.hubspot.com/keyword-user-guide-v2/understanding-keywords>
- Arivananthan. M. Surveys Online and Informal: Getting a broad cross-section of inputs from staff and partners Accessed November 25, 2015 [http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/files/Surveys\\_production.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/files/Surveys_production.pdf)

### Interviews:

- <http://www.simplypsychology.org/interviews.html>

### Asking the right Questions:

- <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/ten-tips-for-asking-good-questions.html>



# Open Educational Resource

*TOWES – The Test of Workplace Essential Skills is Canada’s premier literacy and essential skills assessment. Over 120,000 people have used TOWES on their pathways to success in education, employment and life.*

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