

California State University, Los Angeles Library  
Research Skills  
**Core Information Competencies**

---

The CSULA information literate student can:

**1. Define the research topic and the need for information**

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the assignment or information need and its requirements.
- Develop a purpose statement and a timeline for completion of the project.
- Clearly articulate a focused research question or problem.
- Identify types of materials (journals, government publications, books, Web presentations) that may be used to complete the research.
- Recognize gaps in information or that information may be limited on the topic.

**2. Access information effectively and efficiently**

- Choose key concepts or terms appropriate to the retrieval system selected.
- Recognize that the organization of literature differs by discipline.
- Search the library OPAC, article databases, and Web sites fluently, navigating between print and online sources as necessary.
- Follow a citation and connect citation components with searches.
- Locate information remotely and physically by utilizing URLs, call numbers, linking software, and interlibrary loan.
- Modify the search strategy as necessary.

**3. Evaluate information critically**

- Determine if the information discovered is relevant for the needs of the assignment.
- Distinguish between scholarly and popular sources, primary and secondary sources, and mainstream and alternative sources of information.
- Examine and compare information found in books, articles, and web sites, and evaluate for reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, scope, and timeliness.
- Identify prejudice, bias, deception, or manipulation.

**4. Organize, synthesize, and communicate information for a specific purpose**

- Manage and store search strategies and search results from a variety of resources using various technological tools.
- Integrate new information with previous information to create knowledge appropriate to answering the research question.
- Present information in a manner that supports the assignment or information need.

**5. Ethically and legally access and use information**

- Avoid plagiarism by appropriately summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting and acknowledging sources.
- Legally obtain, store, and use text and data, including sound and images.
- Select and consistently use a citation style appropriate to the discipline.
- Cite correctly printed, multimedia, and online sources.
- Distinguish between free and fee-based access to information.