

Using Google for academic research

Google is (almost) everyone's favourite search engine. It is a quick and easy way to search the vast amounts of free information on the Internet. This includes government sites, many organization and interest groups sites, open access journals, specialist blogs and much more. The Internet is a vital source of up-to-date information and it is worth a little bit of your time to look at how you might improve your use of Google:

www.google.co.uk/help/features.html

TIP Use "quotation marks" to look for an exact phrase

TIP Use *site:* to limit your searches eg 'site:ac.uk'

If you are new to a topic, searching Google and reading Wikipedia can help you get started. But is a reference to Wikipedia in your assignments going to impress? Wikipedia is only as accurate as the last person who updated it. In your academic work, you should always aim to use authoritative sources... like the encyclopaedias available via **Library Search** and the e-resource **Credo Reference**, or academic journals.

What is Google Scholar, and what does it search?

Google Scholar (scholar.google.co.uk) is a search engine for 'scholarly information'. It searches for:

e-books and e-journal articles

selected reports from governments and other organisations

references to printed books and journal articles

both free content and paid-for content.

[My Citations](#) [Alerts](#) [Metrics](#) [Settings](#)



Articles include patents Legal documents

Stand on the shoulders of giants

Google Scholar focuses on what Google considers to be academic publications. But you still need to judge the quality of the information you find for yourself. Try the C.R.A.P. test (Currency, Reliability, Authority, Purpose/Point of View):

guides.library.pdx.edu/content.php?pid=369846&sid=3030081

How does Google Scholar compare to Library Search?

Google Scholar is fast and easy to use, so you may find it easier to get started.

Google Scholar searches a wide range of journals and books, but it may not search some key journals such as *Nature*.

Google Scholar is good for a simple keyword search, but its Advanced Search is limited and may not work well.

Library Search will identify more up-to-date information than Google Scholar, and under **E-Resources** you will find a greater range of specialist information including statistics, financial information, films, images, maps and more

Library Search can search a wide range of journals, including key journals such as *Nature*, and the **Quick Search in Articles & more** searches our collections to find ALL full text results.

Library Search is good for simple searches and you can use **E-Resources** to search databases with their own more sophisticated search options

Remember that no one search will find everything. For thorough searching you should use both Google Scholar and Library Search.

How do I know which full text I can read online?

Google Scholar searches free and paid-for resources. It is the best place to look for open access articles and working papers. A link **[PDF] from organizational URL** or similar is a good indication of free content...and the organization putting it online. But some articles you find are going to ask for your credit card number! To get free access to the journals University of Westminster library pays for you to have, first sign in to Google Scholar as a University of Westminster user:

If you are on campus you're automatically signed in.

If you are off campus, go to **Settings, Library links** and select **University of Westminster** and then **Save** your preferences

Once you're signed in, look out for **Full text LinX@wmin** for access to library subscriptions

TIP Try the link to 'all versions' – one of them may be available

TIP Check **Library Search** – Google Scholar may have missed a link

Can I save my search results?

Yes, you can save references that you find to RefWorks or EndNote. Again use **Settings** and at the foot of the **Search Results** page select your preferred **Bibliographic Manager**.

Any more tips?

If you have a great article on a topic, try finding it on Google Scholar and then following the links to **Related articles** or **Cited by**

Want to find books with information on a very specific topic? Search **Google Book** (books.google.co.uk/). Many older books are available for free. You can also use this to look inside books, and then take the reference and search **Library Search** to see if we have the title.

Further Help

If you have further questions, contact **Ask a Librarian** email enquiry service or you can ask your liaison librarian: www.westminster.ac.uk/library-and-it