ONLINE RESEARCH TIPS

THE POSSIBILITIES!

- The internet offers a world of possibilities!
- With the click of a button, we can find a ton of information.
- **The Problem: How to maximize our search, find the best information, and use it correctly.**

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

- Don't just jump feet-first into the waters of the web!
- Understand the research process:
  1. **Questioning**—Have a list of questions you want answered about your topic.
  2. **Planning**—Develop a search strategy with possible sites to explore.
  3. **Gathering**—Search the web and gather information.
  4. **Sorting & Sifting**—Determine what information is usable and what is not.
  5. **Synthesizing**—Integrate the information into your paper/writing.
  6. **Evaluating**—Determine if you have enough research to support your ideas; if not, begin the process again.

SEARCHING THE WEB

- Holy moly!! How do you find information among the billions of pages out there?
- Know your search engines:
  - **GCU eLibrary—**This is where you find your Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals. For help with this, use the "How to Find Peer-Reviewed Journals" in the research folder.
  - **Google—**great for finding obscure information; don't forget about the "News" tab for finding news articles, or the "Scholar" feature under the "More" tab (for finding scholarly articles)
  - **Yahoo—**the "Directory" link under the "More" tab provides a more specific search-engine
  - Other search engines are out there, like Bing, Dogpile, WebCrawler, and more!

A FEW HANDY SEARCH TIPS:

- Don't forget about Boolean searches.
- With the right commands, you can narrow your search and find what you're looking for:
  - **Quotation Marks**—Using quotation marks will help find specific phrases involving more than one word (i.e. "Salem witch trials").
  - **Addition Sign**—Adding a + sign before a word means that it MUST be included in each site listed (i.e. + Florida + taxes).
  - **Subtraction Sign**—Adding a – sign before a word means that it will NOT appear in the sites listed (i.e. + Washington – DC).
  - **Asterisks**—These can be used for wild-cards in some search engines (i.e. Mexic* will look for Mexico, Mexican, Mexicali, etc.).

EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES

- Just because you found it, doesn't mean you should use it!
- Know how to evaluate sources by looking for:
  - **Accuracy**—Is it factual? Verifiable? Edited?
  - **Authority**—Is the author reputable? Qualified? Affiliated with an organization?
  - **Objectivity**—Is there advertising? Biases? Commercial interests?
  - **Currency**—When was it published? Updated?
  - **Coverage**—Are the topics in depth? Complete?
- **A word of advice:**
  - **AVOID** using Wikipedia for academic papers: It's great for personal use; however, it should not be used for academic purposes.
 - **AVOID** using sites that allow you to post a question and get an easy answer in response.

SAFE PRACTICES

- If you use a source in your writing, you MUST use safe practices. This includes:
  - Summarizing & Paraphrasing—Putting information into your own words.
  - Quoting—Using the exact words from the source.
  - Citations & Works Cited Page
- This means you need to use APA-style format.
- For more details about APA-style format, please see the other resources available in the Add-Ons or the Student Success Center.
- You'll also find lots of helpful information at Purdue's OWL (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/).
- And, when in doubt, ask for help!

WRAPPING UP…

- Take advantage of the tools at your fingertips.
- Use your brain when evaluating sources.
- Don't forget to give credit where credit is due.
- Use the resources for help with GCU-style format.
- And, as always…don't hesitate to ask for help!
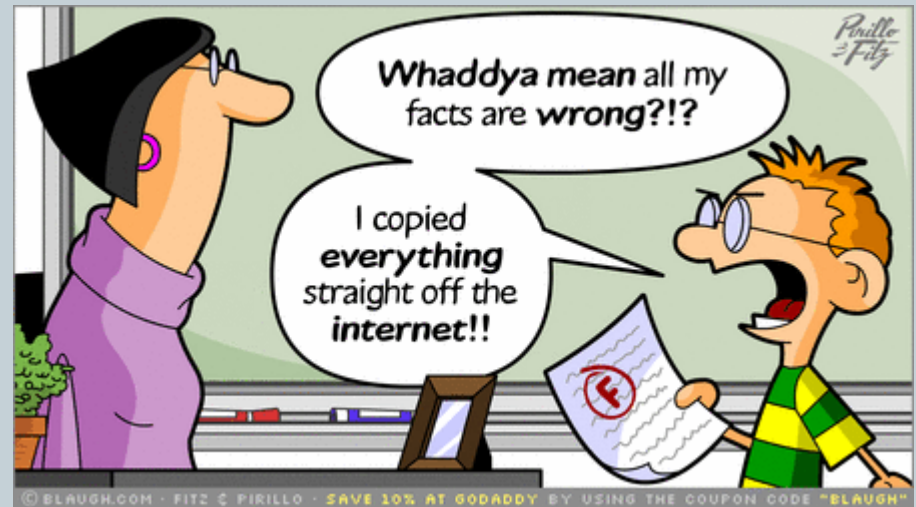
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