The Basics

Contacting the Library Learning Commons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attleboro</td>
<td>Writing &amp; Tutoring</td>
<td>774.357.3543</td>
<td><a href="mailto:attleboroLC@bristolcc.edu">attleboroLC@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>774.357.3745</td>
<td><a href="mailto:libreq@bristolcc.edu">libreq@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall River</td>
<td>Writing &amp; Tutoring</td>
<td>774.357.2295</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fallriverLC@bristolcc.edu">fallriverLC@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>774.357.2105</td>
<td><a href="mailto:libreq@bristolcc.edu">libreq@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Bedford</td>
<td>Writing &amp; Tutoring</td>
<td>774.357.4013</td>
<td><a href="mailto:newbedfordLC@bristolcc.edu">newbedfordLC@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>774.357.4009</td>
<td><a href="mailto:libreq@bristolcc.edu">libreq@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taunton Center</td>
<td>Writing &amp; Tutoring</td>
<td>774.357.2865</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tauntonLC@bristolcc.edu">tauntonLC@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>774.357.4001</td>
<td><a href="mailto:libreq@bristolcc.edu">libreq@bristolcc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finding Help

Research librarians and academic tutors are available on every BCC Campus.

Book-A-Librarian

Our Book-A-Librarian service allows you to make an appointment with any of our research librarians on any campus.

Writing and Subject Tutoring

The Learning Commons is the center for tutoring services. Inside the Commons, you’ll find the subject tutoring center and the writing center. If students are struggling with a class, paper, or want to hone their educational abilities, the Learning Commons can help them reach their goals.

Faculty can arrange for site tours, in-class tutor visits, and/or focused writing workshops for their classes. To do so, please contact the Learning Commons campus email that aligns with the location of your course.

Library Learning Commons Website: http://libguides.bristolcc.edu
Whom should I contact?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When to contact each department within the Library Learning Commons</th>
<th>Contact the Writing &amp; Tutoring Center.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I need help with my math homework.</em></td>
<td>Contact the Library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I need to find 5 websites for my research paper.</em></td>
<td>Contact the Library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I need help outlining my research paper.</em></td>
<td>Contact the Writing &amp; Tutoring Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I need to find peer reviewed journal articles.</em></td>
<td>Contact the Library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I would like some help in Physics.</em></td>
<td>Contact the Writing &amp; Tutoring Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I need help citing my sources.</em></td>
<td>Contact <em>either</em> the Library or the Writing Center.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thinking Storm (Tutoring via eLearning)

Online whiteboard technology is at the core of our online tutoring approach. Think of it as a virtual chalkboard where students and tutors work out problems and diagrams in real-time, creating the instantaneous connection that’s essential to learning.

There's no email and no waiting. The software works on virtually any computer and is optimized for low-bandwidth, so access is simple for students anywhere.

Award-winning software is the best in its class, used by corporate and educational leaders around the world. Plus, the software is 100% secure and private. Our students only communicate with their tutors, so there are no chat rooms and no way for a student’s personal information to leave our secure system.

Simply log into eLearning and click on the box for Thinking Storm.

Library Learning Commons Website: http://libguides.bristolcc.edu
Writing College Essays

Decide on a topic or an issue that is important to you.
React to the topic you have chosen. Brainstorm in whatever ways work best for you. Do you like to freewrite? Cluster? Or do you simply list reactions or details?

What is it that you think or know about the topic? What interests you?

After brainstorming, develop a thesis statement or question.
Use the topic you chose to define whether your thesis is a “why,” “how,” or “what” focus.

Create a plan or outline for your essay.
State your thesis and list the key supporting ideas that will best explain your thesis.

Be sure your supporting ideas are consistent in their focus. Do they all answer the question why, how, or what?

Are your supporting ideas all “causes” or “effects” or “solutions?” Assess whether or not you can develop each of your supporting ideas into a full paragraph.

Consider your outline a “rough game plan” for your essay.
Your outline (essentially your thesis and supporting ideas) will be the skeleton for your paper, but remember it is only a plan.

As you draft the paper, your main point may change or your supporting ideas may need adjusting. It’s okay- we don’t often know what we want to say until we actually put it into words and develop our ideas fully.

Model for an Academic Essay

Introductory paragraph:
• Warm up: an engaging opener invites the reader into your essay.
• Thesis: this sentence (or two) conveys the question, point, or opinion you are defending or defining.
  The rest of the essay exists to support and explain this point. The thesis is the heart of the essay!

Supporting paragraphs:
• Topic sentences convey paragraph ideas and link paragraphs to the thesis.
• Each supporting paragraph develops on paragraph idea with lots of specific details (examples or further explanation of your points). These details give credence, conviction, and soul to your thesis!

Concluding paragraph:
• Here the thesis is restated or emphasized once more, but perhaps in a new way. Supporting ideas can be emphasized as well, but try to vary their presentation to avoid repetition.
• A closing commentary should end the essay gracefully and provide a sense of finale. Advice to the reader, a look into the future, or an insightful look backward is often effective in closing the essay.

Library Learning Commons Website: [http://libguides.bristolcc.edu](http://libguides.bristolcc.edu)
College Essay Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure your essay is at its best.

I have thoroughly understood the prompt or teacher’s instructions.

I have responded appropriately to those instructions.

I have stated a clear purpose or central idea.

I have offered a purposeful and useful introduction.

I have provided plenty of supportive detail.

I have structured my paper so that each paragraph has its own topic and each paragraph follows logically from the one before it.

I have created transitions to provide for a smooth movement from one paragraph to the next.

I have provided an adequate sense of closure, a closing that reflects on what I have learned.

If required to use outside sources, I have integrated that material seamlessly within my own writing.

I have, if that is the case, cited my sources in the format required by my instructor and by the discipline in which I am writing.
Develop a Research Question and Strategy

Your research question is very important when gauging the scope of your research. Developing a clear, focused, and interesting question can help to determine your success.

Explore your topic through questioning

- Ask open-ended questions like how? and why?
- Ask yourself why your topic is important- Why does it matter to you, and why should it matter to others?
- Reflect and identify the questions you feel are worth exploring through research.

Determine and evaluate your research question

Research questions should be specific enough to be well covered in the space available. Questions shouldn’t have simple yes or no answers, and should require research and analysis.

- Take your topic from general to specific.
- Ask yourself if your question is clear and focused.
- Does your research question have enough complexity to fill the pages required by the assignment?

Hypothesize

Research is rarely linear. Consider the directions your research will take you.

- Who is an authority on your topic, and how can you find that information?
- If making an argument, what evidence will you need to support your claims?
  - Why is your argument important?
  - How might others challenge your argument?
- What types of sources will you need to support the claims that you are making?

Sample Research Questions:

Your research question should focus in on a specific angle of an over-arching topic; it should be clear to yourself and the reader which question you are trying to answer; it should be complex enough to invoke thought and interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is your question clear?</th>
<th>Is your question complex?</th>
<th>Is your question focused?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unclear:</strong> Why are social networking sites harmful?</td>
<td><strong>Too Simple:</strong> How are doctors addressing diabetes in the U.S.?</td>
<td><strong>Unfocused:</strong> What is the effect on the environment from global warming?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clear:</strong> How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter?</td>
<td><strong>Appropriately Complex:</strong> What are the common traits of those suffering from diabetes in America, and how can these commonalities be used to aid the medical community in the prevention of the disease?</td>
<td><strong>Focused:</strong> How is glacial melting affecting the penguins in Antarctica?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Indiana University Libraries*
Plagiarism: What it is, How to Avoid it

The Problem
Plagiarism is everyone’s business. As cases in point, consider these recent events:

New York Times reported Jayson Blair was found to have plagiarized copy over several articles under his own byline. Popular artists have not been immune from the charge of plagiarism, as the case of Dr Dre (a rapper who has been accused of lifting a base line from a competitor’s song) has shown. In all of these cases, serious consequences have followed. Jayson Blair, for example, lost his job, as did a supervisor at the Times. Dr Dre has been ordered to pay $1.5 million in damages.

What is Plagiarism?
It is important that we all be clear about the meaning of plagiarism. Because of the need to be precise, we are here quoting verbatim from the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th edition:

“Using another person’s ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person’s work constitutes intellectual theft.”

You may be tempted to believe that plagiarism amounts to the theft of words alone; in fact, the offence involves appropriating as your own “the product of another person’s mind” (as quoted in Gibaldi 66). In other words, when you use someone’s words, ideas, or patterns of thought without acknowledging your source, you are engaging in plagiarism.

Remember:
- Plagiarism occurs whether intended or not.
- Plagiarism can be seen as both a legal issue (copyright infringement) and an ethical one (fraud).

Examples of Plagiarism
Take a look at the passages below for examples of plagiarism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Original</th>
<th>Plagiarized Version A: Taking phrases without quotation or citation</th>
<th>Plagiarized Version B: Appropriating ideas and patterns of thought without citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Until now, the human race has undergone two great waves of change, each one largely obliterating earlier cultures of civilizations and replacing them with the ways of life inconceivable to those who came before. The First Wave of Change- the agricultural revolution- took thousands of years to play itself out. The Second Wave- the rise of industrial civilization- took a mere hundred years.</td>
<td>Up until recent years, humanity has witnessed two great waves of change, each doing away with earlier cultures. The first wave, or the agricultural, took thousands of years. The second, or industrial, only took a hundred years.</td>
<td>There have been two revolutionary periods of change in history: the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution. The agricultural revolution determined the course of history for thousands of years; the industrial civilization lasted about a century. We are now on the threshold of a new period of revolutionary change, but this one may last for only a few decades.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avoiding Plagiarism

Acknowledging Sources
Although formats vary according to the conventions of particular disciplines and subject areas, we acknowledge our sources in two ways: through “in-text citation” and a complete bibliographical list at the end of our paper. In MLA Style this is referred to as a “Works Cited” pages; in APA it is referred to as “References.”

To “cite” a source refers to the practice of mentioning your source within the body of the sentence in which the borrowing occurs, as well as listing the source, with complete bibliographic information, at the end of your essay.

Common Knowledge
*Common Knowledge* refers to information that the average, educated reader would accept as reliable without having to look it up (MIT Academic Integrity Handbook for Students).

Examples include:

- **Information that most people know**, such as oxygen is a gas, the first president of the United States was George Washington, or that water freezes at 32 degrees.
- **Information shared by a cultural or national group**, such as the names of famous heroes or events in the nation’s history that are remembered and celebrated.
- **Knowledge shared by members of a certain field**, such as the fact that the necessary condition for diffraction of ration of wavelength from a crystalline solid is given by Bragg’s Law.

However, what may be common knowledge in one culture, nation, academic discipline or peer group may not be common knowledge to another.

Example:

- A description of the symptoms of Asperger’s Syndrome would need to be cited for a composition in a general writing class, but probably would not need a citation for an audience of graduate students in psychology.

Avoiding Plagiarism
Students tend to plagiarize because they are unaccustomed to using sources productively. Moreover, they find it difficult to present themselves as “experts” when quoting published authorities. So often, as a result, students yield to those sources and virtually disappear from sections of their essays.

- Before you search for sources when doing research, write down a clean and productive question that can drive your search.
- Write down, early on, an inventory of what you know and believe about your topic.
- When reading sources, employ a reliable system of note taking, taking care to separate quotations from summaries and paraphrases, citing your source in all cases.
- When quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing your source, use “signal phrases” to indicate that you are borrowing words or thoughts (“According to Beecher...,” “According to a 2016 study...”) 
- Always cite your sources.
Keyword Searching in Research Databases

Choosing Keywords
Choosing your search terms, or keywords, correctly can mean the difference between relevant and irrelevant results. Start with your thesis question for inspiration on choosing the most relevant keywords.

Example thesis question: How are concussions related to extra-curricular high school sports affecting academic success in adolescents?

Think of keywords and alternative keywords that may be helpful for your search.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main keywords:</th>
<th>concussions</th>
<th>“academic success”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative keywords</td>
<td>OR CTE OR “brain injury”</td>
<td>OR grades OR graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boolean Logic
Using Boolean Logic in your advanced search means that you are using command words (Boolean Operators) to connect your search terms. Boolean Logic allows you to conduct a more specific search and find relevant and specific information using and, or, and not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AND</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>NOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search results will contain both keywords</td>
<td>Search results will contain at least one or both of the keywords</td>
<td>Search results will not contain the keyword following not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concussions AND “academic success”</td>
<td>concussions OR CTE</td>
<td>concussions NOT fractures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Boolean Logic in an Advanced Search
Boolean Operators may be used in most academic databases. In this example, an advanced search is used and the terms have been separated into separate boxes.

Nesting
Boolean operators can also be used by nesting your search terms using parentheses in place of the boxes in the advanced search.

Library Learning Commons Website: [http://libguides.bristolcc.edu](http://libguides.bristolcc.edu)
Searching Toolkit

Phrase Searching:
Phrase searching allows you to search for a specific phrase, as opposed to individual words. The quotation marks act as a bracket, grouping the words together. Use quotations on two-or-more word phrases.

Example:
older adult = 136,421 results
“older adult” = 14,705 results

Truncating
Truncation allows a researcher to run a single search for a word with multiple possible endings. Most academic databases use the asterisk (*) to truncate, however, check the HELP menu for specifics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Truncated Word</th>
<th>Possible Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vaccin*</td>
<td>vaccine, vaccinate, vaccinated, vaccinating, vaccination, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wildcards
Use wildcards in databases to search for an unknown character or words with multiple spellings. Most databases will either use a question mark (?) or a pound sign (#) to represent wildcards. Replace each unknown character with the wildcard symbol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wildcard</th>
<th>Possible Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>neat, next, nest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*The database will not find “net” because the ? indicates a missing letter.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wildcard</th>
<th>Possible Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>color or colour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*The # wildcard will find alternative spellings for words.*

Limiters
The database allows you to limit to specific types of articles, specific ranges of publication, or specific geographies (among others). You can apply limiters before you search or after you have run the search.

![Limiters example](image)

Library Learning Commons Website: [http://libguides.bristolcc.edu](http://libguides.bristolcc.edu)
Finding Information on the Web

Websites can help you to gain a broad understanding of a topic, however the information tends to be shallow. Search engines like Google are an excellent tool for finding statistics and other data sets.

Authority

- Check the URL: is the website built to mimic a more well-known news group or company? Know what each URL domain indicates about the content and authority of the site.
  - .com: a commercial site
  - .edu: an educational site
  - .gov: a government site
  - .net: a personal site
  - .org: an organizational site
- Who produced the site? Check the About Us page to understand more about the purpose of the site.
- Who is the author of the page? Are they credible and authoritative? Is there a way to contact the author or organization?
- Use Google or another search engine to research the author or organization of your source. Look for content from external websites about the person or organization to give you additional insight.

Bias and Objectivity

- What is the purpose of the site, why was it created?
- Does the site push a specific viewpoint or agenda?
- Can you detect circular reasoning or logical errors? Do you detect language that appears to attack someone personally, as opposed to challenging his/her ideas?

Sources and Documentation

- Look for sources: is there adequate documentation for factual statements? If sources are available, are they reliable? Are sources cultivated from multiple sources or from one source only (including self-referential sources)?
- Can you verify the information from a second, separate, and reliable source? Cross-check suspicious information from widely-recognized credible sources.
- Is there enough information on the page to create a citation? (Author, title, date, etc.).

Quality and Currency

- Evaluate the quality of the content: is the writing without error, well-sourced, and clear?
- Is the information on the page current? Is the site updated regularly? Is there a news section, and if so, how recently was it updated?
- Are statistics current and well sourced?
- Do photographs appear to be doctored, photoshopped, or altered in any way?

Read and Decide

- Read the information on the page you would like to use as a source before you decide to use it in your research. Do you feel that the source is credible? Would you be comfortable basing an argument on the facts and information provided?