

Tutorial 8 transcript - Research demonstration

(Part 1 Finding general information)

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Okay, so in the previous video we had a look at this pyramid before us, which is the research model of getting a base level of knowledge through broad resources before gradually increasing our depth of knowledge by moving toward more focused information types, like books and journal articles. So what I want to do in the module is begin to take you through this pyramid, starting with the base knowledge information types, specifically those on the right-hand side there. Now, of course, be sure not to neglect those on the left; do read your lecture notes – your teachers do want you to succeed, and during the lectures they often signpost information and concepts that they want you to focus on. Also, your Reading List as well can be a really good starting point.

But with dictionaries and encyclopedias, there are various ones you can use depending on what subject you're doing. But there's one in particular – a very general one – that I'd like to recommend to you. And in order to do this I need to have a look at another example question. So the example I'm going to use this time is: The ideal of human rights is not universal. Discuss.

Okay, so again without breaking it down too much, we're going to pull out the keywords, in this case I've pulled out: ideal of human rights; not universal; and discuss. Okay, so again, when it comes to searching, you're not just going to use one set of words; you're going to use several words, and you need back-up words as well. So think about – grab a thesaurus and start thinking about brainstorming alternative terms.

In this case, you can see the ones that I've worked out there. Just a note on the end there: that Discuss in yellow? That's a task word. Now you'll usually get a task word in just about every assignment you do. Others might be criticise, analyse, evaluate. What I would suggest you do when you get a task word is go to a glossary of task words. Now you can pick one of these on the open Internet. This one is from the University of New South Wales, and you can see here they talk a little bit about and define what each task word is. In this case, the task word we had was: discuss. That'll define it for you. It's talking about investigate or examine by argument, and various other criteria. So use one of these glossaries to give you guidance on how to approach your question.

Okay, so, we've got our question, and we've pulled out our keywords. Now where are we going to go first? We're going to go to our library guides – we mentioned those in a previous module.

Now the question is concerning politics and government and human rights. I would go to the government library guide, but in this case that's under construction at the moment, so I'm going to go to the english guide instead. And you'll recall from the module about the library guides that you navigate across using the tabs – across the top here. And I'm going to go to the getting started tab, because that's what I'm doing at the moment; I'm just getting started.

And you can see here: recommended online and reference sources, one of which is Credoreference. And this is the one I want to recommend to you. This is a very good resource that UTAS subscribes to.

So all we're going to do here— you'll see that because we've gone in through the English guide, it's having a look in the literature resources at the moment. I'm just going to switch that – change it up – and the closest I come to is social sciences, of which government is part of.

So what we're going to do is we're just going to put in our keyword – I'm just going to put in a keyword now; I'm not going to combine any words. Remember, when you're down the base level of the pyramid, you can afford to be— it's a very broad knowledge, so you can afford to be very broad in your search, so you probably use one, maybe two, search terms. When you start to get up near the top near journal articles – and to a lesser extent books – then you can start using more and more keywords, combining them together, because you're getting very specific. But in this broad spectrum that we're looking at here, I'm going to use a single word; I just want to have a look— I want to get a general idea, a general overview, of human rights and what that means.

So I'm just going to click on the search button there. Now what's happening with Credoreference is it's searching a whole range of dictionaries and encyclopedias. So you can see the first reference entry there: it's looking in the Gale world of sociology. Gale is an encyclopedia.

And then, second one there: dictionary of diplomacy. And there's a good one down here: Human rights and the international encyclopedia of environmental pol— actually we'll go with the Greenwood international encyclopedia of international relations. This one here.

So once you find one that looks pretty good, you click on it. And basically what it's going to give you is a very concise overview of that particular term – so a nice, easy, manageable chunk of information. So you can see here it's usually no more than a thousand words. They do vary, but the average is about one thousand to two thousand words – so it's very manageable.

And you just have a look at those; it's just kind of introducing you to the concept. And you'll see here I think it's the third sentence ... says here that 'because of its universalism' – well that's interesting; that's what we were looking for: we were looking for human rights, and whether they're universal or not. 'Because of its universalism, it is an idea inherently controversial in a world of parochial, sovereign states.'

So this is the idea of universality versus local, confined, or parochial ideas, or sovereign states, or independent states. So already we're on the right track here and you can see there that term universalism is linked, so we can then click out to that if we want to, and then find out a bit more about universalism.

So, that's essentially how this works. There's just this general idea of Credoreference introducing you to the very basic principle, and then you can start to build upon that knowledge.