Starting assignments
Study Guide

To complete an assignment at TAFE, you will need to research your topic. There are 5 steps to researching (this guide will focus on step 2, finding information):

**Step 1: Check your assignment. What have I been asked to do?**
- What do the words mean? What are the important words? What do I need to know?
- How do I present the assignment: essay, oral presentation, multimedia?
- How long? How specific: in-depth or overview?
- How much time will I need to spend on it?

**Step 2: Find information**
- What type of resources do I need? Where will I find the resources?
- Will this resource have the right type of information, at the level I need, in the format that I want?
- Has the lecturer specified certain resources? Is there a course reading list?

**Step 3: Evaluate the information**
- Is the information current, reliable, accurate, to the right depth?
- Is it biased? Is it relevant?
- Take notes and the bibliographic details. See Library Study Guides on Referencing.

**Step 4: Present the information**
- How do I put the information together in the required format?
  See Library Study Guides on Effective Presentations, Essay Writing or Report Writing.

**Step 5: Evaluate your research process**
- What worked well? What was a waste of time? How could I do better next time?

Let’s look at step 2, finding information.

**What type of resources?**
Use a variety of resource types from the following list (in print or in electronic format):

- **Dictionaries and Glossaries**
  These will help you understand the meanings of words. There are also subject-specific and technical dictionaries. A thesaurus gives alternate words, so is useful for finding keywords for your searches.

- **Encyclopedias**
  General and subject specific encyclopedias provide useful background information. Many experts contribute to their content, so they can be authoritative. However, some web encyclopedias, for example Wikipedia, accept information from anyone, and sources are not always cited, thus content may not be accurate.

- **Magazines / Journals**
  Articles in periodicals, journals, magazines or newspapers are often more up-to-date than books and are shorter to read.
Lecturers may request that you include peer-reviewed, or refereed, journal articles in your assignment. This may be a search option in the magazine/journal database you use.

- **Online Databases (electronic articles)**
  Articles are available through online databases from the TAFE SA library homepage. Go to any campus catalogue, log into My Library and select Online Databases from left. The databases vary in the subject areas that they cover, and the depth of detail. Articles may be summarised (an abstract), or available as a complete article (full-text). Articles can be read online, downloaded, printed or emailed. Database guides are available online from your library’s homepage and in your library. Database training sessions are also offered in the library and are arranged by your lecturer.

- **Audio-visual material**
  Photos, diagrams, recorded interviews and video/DVD media provide information, and may also be incorporated into your final presentation if your assignment needs visual impact.

- **Acts, Regulations, Court Cases and Standards**
  Use these if you need to include legal information in your assignment. Check the library catalogue for print copies. However, the most recent information will be on the web:
  - Australian Standards: saiglobal.com/online
  - South Australian Government legislation: legislation.sa.gov.au
  - Commonwealth, State legislation and legal information: www.austlii.edu.au

- **Miscellaneous materials**
  These include booklets, pamphlets, trade information, CD-ROMs, posters, lecturer’s materials etc.
  These materials are generally subject-specific, and have a narrow focus.

- **Industry**
  Companies and organisations produce reports, product catalogues, trade information and brochures.
  These are usually up-to-date, but could be biased.

- **People**
  It may be worthwhile interviewing people with special knowledge, including industry and community leaders, workplace colleagues or TAFE personnel.

**Where will I find these resources?**

**Library catalogue**
This can be searched from any computer on campus or from home. Lists the library resources, and has links to online journals, useful websites and e-books.

You can search by topic, keyword, title, author etc. and refine your search by material type, collection and publication date. See Library Study Guide Search the Library Catalogue.

When searching for miscellaneous material, for example pamphlets or posters, note the location area, as they could be shelved in a separate area, or behind the service desk.

Try the online library catalogues of other libraries, such as the University of South Australia, State Library or your local public library

**Your TAFE library web page**
Visit your campus library in person or online at http://library.tafesa.edu.au.
Note opening hours and contact details.
Use links to online library catalogues, electronic resources, study guides, and other services.

**Web sites**
- South Australian information: http://www.sacentral.sa.gov.au
- Australian information: http://www.australia.gov.au

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Visit us on campus or at http://library.tafesa.edu.au or contact us at librarian@tafesa.edu.au