



# EFFECTIVE RESEARCH AND WRITING STRATEGIES

So you have this essay, term paper or Literature Review to write?

## WHAT MUST YOU DO?

There are a number of steps to take to ensure that you produce a high quality paper.

This exhibition is designed to assist students in examining the key areas that will guide them in developing excellent research and writing skills.



## RESEARCH STEPS

1. Define your topic
2. Identify sources of information
3. Locate these sources of information
4. Evaluate these sources of information
5. Select relevant information from these sources
6. Read and understand these sources (Analysis)
7. Determine your main points and supporting points (Analysis)
8. Take accurate notes from these sources making sure you take down all the appropriate bibliographic details for the item you used, for e.g. for a journal article you would need to write down the author/s, the title of the article, the journal title, volume, issue number and page numbers
9. Write a first draft of your paper by combining your views with those of the authors you have read (Synthesis)
10. Cite sources in the body of your essay and for each of these sources write a full reference at the end of your paper
11. Read, write, edit your paper and then get a peer to review it
12. Make necessary changes, edit and then present your paper

**We will now examine a number of these steps.**

## STEP 1

### DEFINE YOUR TOPIC

Let us say you had this paper to write:

*Discuss and analyze the activities and implications of the Informal Economy in Jamaica.*

- You would need first to identify and list all the keywords in your topic.
- These are the main terms in your topic. They tell what your topic is about.
- Sometimes you may have to identify synonyms or related terms of these keywords. To locate these you may have to use dictionaries/ encyclopedias.
- The keywords for this essay topic are: informal economy and Jamaica.

## Look at this list of possible main terms

### POSSIBLE MAIN TERMS/SYNONYMS/RELATED TERMS

Informal economy	(main term)
Informal sector	(a related term)
Underground economy	(a related term)
Higglers	(since they form part of the informal sector)
Hucksters	(since they form part of the informal sector)
Black market	(a related term)

**Can you think of any others?**

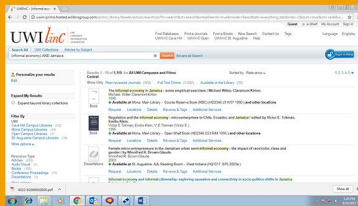


## STEP 2 - IDENTIFY SOURCES

Start with the Library



Begin with **UWILinc** to identify printed or electronic books, pamphlets, journal articles, and many more sources.



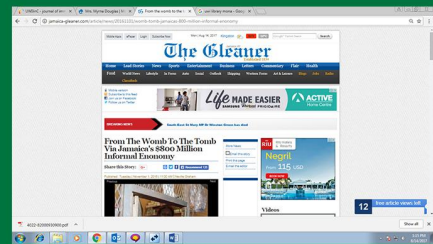
- You can search **UWILinc** from anywhere, but you must come to the Library for items that are not available to you electronically
- To access online materials when you are off campus or using wireless connection you need to provide your university identification number and your password when prompted to do so.

You can search by:

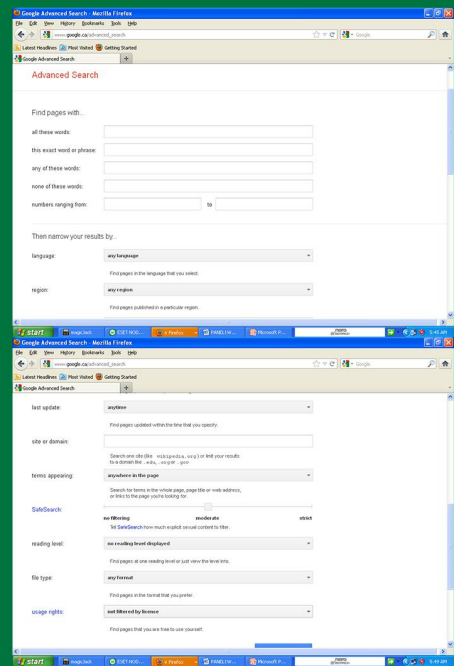
Author	e.g. witter, michael
Keywords	e.g. informal economy
Subject	e.g. Informal sector (Economics) -- Jamaica
Title	e.g. Jamaican higglers: their significance and potential

- Use the keywords/synonyms or related terms to search.
- You may use quotation marks around phrases so that they are searched as one concept and not as separate words "informal economy"
- Use **AND** to combine terms e.g. "informal economy" AND Jamaica
- Use **OR** for synonyms for e.g. "informal economy" OR "informal sector"
- Use **NOT** to remove irrelevant material for e.g. Jamaica NOT New York since there is a Jamaica, New York

- Use the same principles to search **NEWSPAPER INDEXES** online to get scholarly newspaper articles



- Also, you can search the **INTERNET** to get scholarly material by either searching **Google Scholar** or do an **Advanced Search on Google.com** and search scholarly domains such as .edu, .gov, .org or .net





## STEP 3 - LOCATE THE SOURCES

You should have gathered scholarly information from a number of sources:

- Books
- Journal articles
- Newspaper articles
- The Internet
- You may also interview experts on the subject



## Internet Article on Informal Economy



## STEP 4 CRITICALLY EVALUATE THE INFORMATION



You need to critically evaluate all the information you find especially those on the Internet for credibility and objectivity. The Internet is convenient and the information is plentiful, but it has no editors; anyone can publish on it. You therefore need to carefully evaluate what you locate. How can you do this?

- **Accuracy & Authority** – Ensure that the writer of the article is an expert in the field or is recommended by experts and is associated with a reputable institution (university/publisher). The best way to validate information is to check more than one source such as other websites or printed sources. Check to see if the facts mentioned are documented and supported by other researchers such as their peers. The research should have in-text citations as well as references at the end of the paper. Note if biases are presented as facts or opinions. Check the URL domain. It should be a scholarly domain such as: .edu, .gov, .org, or .net

- **Currency** – You need to examine when the information was published and when the site was last updated, bearing in mind that historical information do not change but changes occur within certain disciplines such as education, science and technology.

- **Objectivity** – you need to find out why the article was written and who its intended audience are. Some pages are set up for advertisements and hence may be biased

- **Coverage/Scope** – How in-depth is the information covered? Is it primary research coming from a scholarly journal that presents original research methods or/and new theories? Is it secondary research which may be a newspaper report of a journalist eyewitness account which is a primary source? Secondary research is a compilation of material previously presented such as articles summarizing research previously done. Reports in books and encyclopedias would fall in this category.

You may want to do this evaluation test for all types of information. It is from the Meriam Library, California State University, Chico





## EVALUATION CRITERIA

**Currency** - The timeliness of the information.

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
- Are the links functional?

**Relevance** - The importance of the information for your needs.

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining that this is the one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?

**Authority** - The source of the information.

- Who is the author or publisher?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? examples: .com .edu .gov .org .net

**Accuracy** - The reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the content.

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors?

**Purpose** - The reason the information exists.

- What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
- Do the authors or publishers make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?

## STEP 5

### SELECT RELEVANT INFORMATION FROM THESE SOURCES

- Once you have evaluated the information and you are satisfied that the sources are credible, you need to read and get a sense of what the authors are saying.
- Analyse what you read and begin to form your opinions and viewpoints from the ideas you are interacting with.
- Try to develop an opinion and avoid just simply describing what you read.
- You also need to determine your thesis statement which will govern how your paper will be focused.
- Write your ideas down and then plan how you are going to structure and write an outline for your paper.
  - First, you need to determine your thesis statement which will govern how your paper will be focused.
  - Each paragraph that you write must support this thesis by adding a dimension or add clarity to your thesis statement.
  - This means you are going to pull information from the sources that will support your thesis.
- Analyse! Analyse! do not simply describe what the sources say.
- Ensure that you take accurate notes.
- The information that you are going to quote/paraphrase or summarize must be clearly identified in your notes with page references
- Write the bibliographic details (author, title, publication, etc.) for all the works used in your papers at the point when you are writing your notes.
- Take special care in writing down the page numbers for the notes you have taken, in order to do in-text citations and full references at the end of your paper.



## STEP 6 - AVOID PLAGIARISM

- To avoid plagiarism you must quote/paraphrase/summarise and then cite the authors you have used in the body of your work.
- To properly paraphrase that is, avoid following the sentence structure of the authors, you need to read and understand what is communicated. Put the work away from you and then write what you understand in your own words.
- It is unacceptable to merely give a list of references at the end of your paper, you **MUST** do in-text citations.
- Now examine how you can begin to write an essay on this topic after you have read and written an outline for your paper.

### ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Which grade do you desire?



**Research, organize and evaluate**

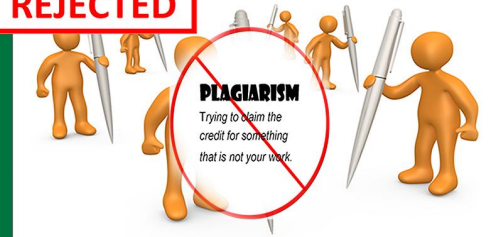
**A. B+. OR B ESSAYS**

An 'A', B+, or B paper will create a "dialogue" between the essay author's ideas and his/her sources, and also among the sources themselves. If you imagine a synthesis essay as a room in which the synthesis writer is joined by the authors of her/his sources, the 'A', B+, or B essay has everyone engaged in conversation or debate, with everyone commenting on (or arguing against) each other's ideas directly. Each contributor is acknowledged in the body of the text by in-text citations and a reference list is given at the end of the paper.

- <http://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/135/Synthesis.html>

NO ANALYSIS, LARGELY DESCRIPTIVE  
CUTTING & PASTING WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING

**REJECTED**



**D, E, OR F ESSAYS**

Reading without Analysing  
Describing without Synthesizing

A 'D', and below, essay will often be a summary of one point at a time, with your ideas stated at the end. In the 'D' and below essay, each person in the room stands up in turn, gives a speech, and sits down, with little or no question and answer period in between or afterward.

The authors usually cut and paste or use other authors' ideas without giving credit by citations and references.

- <http://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/135/Synthesis.html>





## ESSAY

Discuss and analyze the activities and implications of the Informal Economy in Jamaica

You must read with an analytical mind and discern what is said by the authors and form your own opinions. Identify first a thesis statement which will be your main point. Then identify sub points to support your main points.

In reading through 5 sources related to informal economy the following thesis statement was identified

### Thesis Statement

There is a plethora of economic activities that are carried on within the informal economy which has both positive and negative implications for Jamaica.

Then YOU will set about identifying the economic activities and analyse each of them in terms of the impact they will have on Jamaica.

If there are many activities and based on the number of words for the paper YOU may choose to narrow the focus of the paper, by using a theme/trend/or chronology.

### Introduction

In your introduction YOU should define the concept

“informal economy”. YOU should also where necessary, state the scope of your paper that is what you hope to cover in your paper.

YOUR analysis and views must be evident in your paper.

The many names that the informal economy goes by, are a testament to its vastness and complexity and the challenge it poses for economists, social planners and researchers. “There is no agreement on how to define the informal economy or even what to call it,” states the Inter-American Development Bank Report (2009, p. 15). It is therefore not surprising that Witter and Kirton (1990) refer to the informal economy as “the complex of all informal activities” (p. 2). These activities vary in terms of their legal status, size, locality and linkage to the formal economy. Thomas however brings some clarity to the situation in making the point that there are four different types of informal economic activity; household sector; informal sector; underground sector and the criminal sector (Thomas, 2001, pp.1-2).

He also sought to define informal economic activity as “the production of economic goods and services whose value is not fully included, if at all in the National Income Accounts of a country and therefore must have two critical features: whether market transactions are involved and whether either the goods and services or processes of production and distribution are legal or illegal” (2001, pp. 1-2). The focus of this paper will be confined to three of these sectors since the household sector does not engage in market transactions, because goods and services are produced and consumed in the home and do not reach a market (Thomas, p. 2). Therefore this essay will limit its discussion entirely to the economic activities surrounding the informal economy and the positive and negative impact these activities have on Jamaica.

It is extremely challenging for social planners within the Jamaican society to assess the contribution of the informal sector to the economy because their activities go undocumented. In highlighting the difficulty of assessing the true contribution made by this sector Reid (2009) quoted Dr. Pauline Knight Director of Social Policy, Planning and Research as saying that “it is the sector that is not being recorded... the [S]tatistical [I]nstitute has to use ad hoc means of trying to count the sector to include them in the GDP measure because they are not automatically included because they are hidden so it is the underground economic operations”. Yet the growth in this sector “from an estimated 28% of GDP in 1989 to an estimated 43% in 2001” is partly responsible for the fall in unemployment from “15% in 1990 to 10.6% in 2008 percent” (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009, p. 5). More recent studies estimate the size of the informal sector to be as high as 60% of the formal economy (Graham, 2016).



## References

Graham, N. (2016, November 1). From the womb to the tomb via Jamaica's \$800 million informal economy. *The Gleaner*. Retrieved from <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20161101/womb-tomb-jamaicas-800-million-informal-economy>

Inter-American Development Bank. (2006). *The informal sector in Jamaica*. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank. Retrieved from <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/4326?locale-attribute=en>

Planning Institute of Jamaica. (2009). *National report of Jamaica on development goals*. Kingston, Jamaica: Planning Institute of Jamaica.

Reid, T. (2009, May 30). Necessary evil? Informal sector helping to reduce country's unemployment and poverty levels. *The Gleaner*, p. A4.

Thomas, J. (2001). What is the informal economy anyway. *SAIS Review*, 21(1), 1-11.

Witter, M., & Kirton, C. (1990). *The informal economy in Jamaica: Some empirical exercises*. Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research.

Did YOU notice that the writer did not just describe what the authors said, but had an analytical view of the issue surrounding the topic?

Did YOU also notice that the sources used are cited in the body of the text and that the full references are provided at the end of the paper? You must endeavor to do this to avoid

