Using Copilot for Academic Research

Best practices for finding, narrowing, and organizing credible sources

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TIP 1: Clearly State Your Grade Level, Subject, and Research Goal

Always tell Copilot **who you are and what kind of academic task** you are doing.

Why this matters:
It helps Copilot use appropriate academic language and recommend sources suitable for high school (not blogs or college-only research).

Examples

1. *"I am a Grade 10 student writing a science research report. Explain climate change using academic language appropriate for high school."*

2. *"I'm a Grade 11 student working on a history inquiry project. Provide background on the causes of World War I at a high school academic level."*

3. *"I'm a Grade 12 student preparing a sociology research paper. Introduce the concept of social stratification using clear academic terminology."*

TIP 2: Explicitly Ask for Academic and Peer-Reviewed Sources

Copilot works best when you **clearly state what type of sources you want**.

Types of sources students should ask for:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles

- Academic books

- Government or university websites

- Reputable research organizations (WHO, CDC, Statistics Canada, etc.)

Examples

1. *"Provide an overview of the health effects of vaping and list 3 peer-reviewed journal articles suitable for a high school research paper."*

2. *"Find academic sources on renewable energy adoption in Canada, prioritizing peer-reviewed studies or government publications."*

3. *"Explain how social media affects teen mental health and include scholarly sources or academic reviews I could cite."*

TIP 3: Purposefully Narrow the Topic Before Researching Deeply

Copilot should be used **before heavy research begins** to refine the topic.

Why this matters:
Academic research requires focus. Narrow topics lead to stronger theses and better sources.

Examples

1. *"My topic is climate change. Help me narrow it to a specific impact, location, and time period suitable for a Grade 11 science paper."*

2. *"I want to study World War II. Suggest focused research topics related to Canada's role rather than the entire war."*

3. *"Help me narrow 'mental health in teenagers' into a researchable question with available peer-reviewed sources."*

TIP 4: Ask Follow-Up Questions to Continue Narrowing (Without Writing the Paper)

Use Copilot for **iterative questioning**, not essay generation.

Focus on:

- Refining research questions

- Identifying variables

- Checking if academic sources exist

Examples of Follow-Up Prompts

1. *"Which of these narrowed topics has the most peer-reviewed research available for high school use?"*

2. *"Can you further narrow this topic to one age group, region, or variable commonly studied in academic research?"*

3. *"What keywords would researchers use when publishing academic articles on this topic?"*