

ICT

Study Module 3

Finding and selecting information

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3 Finding and selecting information

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- ➡ identify the information requirements of a task
- ➡ construct efficient searches
- ➡ evaluate the reliability of websites
- ➡ select appropriate information
- ➡ acknowledge your sources

Introduction

The internet is a vast source of information. This means that finding what you want is not always straight-forward. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of information available and – not surprisingly – a lot of what you find will probably not be suitable.

In this module, you will learn how to find what you want on the internet and what you can and cannot do with the information you discover.

Skill Standards covered

At Level 1, you can...	At Level 2, you can...
2 Interact with and use ICT systems to meet requirements of a straightforward task in a familiar context	2 Select, interact with and use ICT systems safely and securely for a complex task in non-routine and unfamiliar contexts
2.1 Select and use software applications to meet needs and solve straightforward problems	2.1 Select and use software applications to meet needs and solve complex problems
5 Use search techniques to locate and select relevant information	4 Use appropriate search techniques to locate and select relevant information
5.1 Search engines, queries	4.1 Search engines, queries and AND/NOT/OR, >,<,>=,<=, contains, begins with, use of wild cards
6 Select information from a variety of ICT sources for a straightforward task	5 Select information from a variety of sources to meet requirements of a complex task
6.1 Recognise and take account of currency, relevance, bias and copyright when selecting and using information	5.1 Recognise and take account of copyright and other constraints on the use of information
	5.2 Evaluate fitness for purpose of information

A

What information do I need?

You will save a great deal of time if you plan out what information you need to gather before you start looking. Answers to questions like these will help you:

- What am I going to do with the information?
- How much information do I need?
- Who is my audience?
- Do I know any likely sources?
- What format do I need the information in? Text, numbers, audio, still or moving images?

Tip

It is easy to get side-tracked on the internet – keep an eye on your watch, especially if you only have a limited amount of time available to search for information.



Which software application should I use?

Use a browser to view and navigate pages on the world-wide web. To direct a browser to a particular website or web page enter the address into the browser's address bar, like this.



Browsers allow you to automatically build and store collections of favourite web addresses. These are known as '**bookmarks**' or '**favourites**'. Clicking on an entry in the favourites makes the browser load that web page without you having to enter the address into the browser address bar.

A **search engine** is a program that searches a database of web pages to find those that match a given set of search criteria. For example, if you type the words 'healthy eating' into a search engine, you get over 7 million 'hits'. If you search pages from the UK only, you get around 500,000. Narrow down the search further to get information that is more relevant to your search.

<http://www>. This bit tells your browser that it is looking for a web page – nowadays it's enough just to write 'www.bbc.co.uk'.

This is a BBC web address:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/index.shtml>

[/index.shtml](#) is the name of the file containing the web page. Web addresses do not always have this part.

[bbc.co.uk](#) is the domain. This is the name of the computer which stores the file containing the web page.

Skill Builder 3.1

- Open the list of favourites in your browser. Click on an entry in the list. What happens?
- Add the address of a website that interests you to your browser's favourites.
- What other facilities does your browser offer?



Efficient searches

When hunting for information on the internet, make sure that the **search criteria** you use accurately describe what you are looking for. Search engines find the most relevant pages first, based on the search criteria you have entered.

A poorly constructed search is likely to result in a huge number of 'hits'. Make your search more effective by providing as much detail as possible. The more you narrow down the search, the better the results you will get. If you are looking for car insurance, for example, don't just search for 'insurance' – there will be too many results. Searching for 'car insurance' will return web pages that are much more relevant.

Put speech marks around whole phrases that need to be matched or use your browser's **advanced search** option.

Skill Builder 3.2

Use a search engine to find out:

- What is the speed limit on motorways in France?
- How can you get by train from London to Amsterdam? How long will it take? Do you need to change?
- Where is Edexcel's head office?

Tip

Avoid information overload by identifying what you need to find and using well-structured searches.

Check it out

Anyone can put just about anything on the web, so don't assume that all the information is accurate or reliable. You need to decide if the website is trustworthy. Is the information it provides reliable? Is it up-to-date? Bear in mind:

- Personal opinions can affect what people tell you.
- An incorrect search criterion can produce misleading information.
- Look for evidence of bias. A website that is designed to sell you something is likely to emphasise the positives and play down the negatives.
- Different sources don't always agree.
- Information found on the internet is likely to be more reliable if it comes from a government, academic or 'not for profit' website rather than a commercial, blog or personal website.

Skill Builder 3.3

List these sources in order of how reliable and accurate the information in them is likely to be:

www.wikipedia.org

www.bbc.co.uk

www.direct.gov.uk


www.manufans.co.uk

Did You Know?

Ofqual, the Exams watchdog, has advised pupils in England not to rely on Wikipedia as a research tool for their coursework. It warned them that information on Wikipedia may not "be authoritative and accurate" and, in some cases, could be "completely untrue". It said that search engines such as Google and Yahoo are excellent sources of information because they pool material from lots of different sources.

Skill Builder 3.4

Practise evaluating websites.

-  Open digital asset SB3.4.1. Use this table to evaluate websites. Give each website a score of between 1 and 5 points for each of the evaluation categories listed in the table.
- Using a single key word (for example: schools, rap, graffiti or boxing), search the internet for information.
- From the results, pick different websites, look at them and award points for each category, then total them up. Which of your websites has the highest and which the lowest overall score?
- Ask a friend to score the same websites.
- Compare and discuss your results.

Tip

Don't assume that the internet is always better than using other sources. Often it is best to use more than one source, compare the results and then select the best information. Sometimes different sources will tell you different things. For example, you might find two different telephone numbers for the same business. You will need to investigate further to find out which is the right one for your call.

B Can I use it?

Just because you find some useful information on the internet, don't assume you can use it in your own work.

Much of the information on websites is copyrighted. Always check that you are not breaking the law by using copyright material without permission.

Remember: Copyright legally protects the owner from having their work used without permission. It protects information such as books, photographs, music, sound recordings, video and broadcasts.

Finding and using images

Many people use a search engine such as Google or Yahoo to look for images to include in their publications. Google and Yahoo both have a useful 'image search' facility.

There are, however, drawbacks to this. Often search engines do not distinguish between copyright and non-copyright images. Most of the images you will find are likely to be protected by copyright. It is also likely that many of them are too small for use or of poor quality.

Creative Commons is one good source of images, but you can also find 'public domain' images. These are images that are not protected by copyright law. You can use any public domain image (or other type of asset that is in the public domain), although you still need to acknowledge where the image came from.

Many software packages include images that you can use as long as you own a licensed copy of the software. Always check the licence agreement. Sometimes you are given limited permission, for example it is fine to use the image in a screen-based publication such as a presentation, but not in a printed document such as a poster, or you can include it in a publication for non-commercial use but not if you are advertising a paid-for event, even if proceeds are going to charity.

How do I save what I have found?

If you have checked that copyright does not prevent you from using the information, then consider practical questions such as:

- How can I save the information I have found?
- How much storage space is it likely to need?
- How long will it take to download? (Don't forget that there may be other people sharing the internet connection.)
- Is the information in a format that I can work with? Do I have the necessary software?
- How much editing do I have to do? How long will it take?

Skill Builder 3.5

- Create a folder for information from the internet.
- Experiment with different ways of saving the information.
- Practice using information from the internet in other application software, e.g. word processing or presentation software.
- Which format is easiest to use?

Acknowledging sources

Every time you gather information from the internet or another source, you are using information that someone else has created. You must not use this information without acknowledging the source.

It is best to copy the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) directly from the address window in the browser to ensure there are no errors.

Record details of the copyright holder and permissions. Don't forget to make a note of the date as well.

Tip

- If you use your own words to summarise information from a source, you must still acknowledge the source.
- Always make sure you have permission before you use someone's details.

Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism is when someone presents someone else's information or ideas as if they were their own.

Be warned! If you use someone else's information, you must acknowledge the source in your own publication. You may need to ask permission to use it.

Did You Know?

Plagiarism is a form of cheating that can lead to disqualification in an examination!

Did You Know?

Whilst you are busy surfing the web, someone else could be spying on you. They do so secretly without you even noticing! The software they use is called 'spyware'. Spyware programs log a user's keyboard activity and are designed to capture personal information such as password or credit card numbers. Captured information is sent automatically to the spyware creator.

Skill Builder 3.6

Use the internet to find out more about spyware. What measures can you take to reduce the risk of infection?

Tip**Tips for finding reliable information on the internet**

- Think before you search.
- Do not believe everything you see or hear on the internet.
- Always check information using another source.
- Check permissions before using material you find.
- Record where exactly you found the information.

Tip**Tips for staying safe online**

- Never give out personal information to people you meet online.
- If you come across inappropriate information, let someone know.
- Report anything suspicious.
- If in doubt, log off.

C

Wrapping up

Skill Check – make sure you know how to:

- ✓ use an internet browser
- ✓ use a search engine
- ✓ use keyword searches
- ✓ use advanced search options
- ✓ bookmark a page
- ✓ copy and paste a link
- ✓ save information in usable formats
- ✓ record sources
- ✓ stay safe online

Test Tips

- You only have 15 minutes at the start of the test to use the internet, so you will need to work smartly. Make sure you are clear what information you need to find and where you will use it (most probably in Task 3).
- Have a look at the mark schemes for the Level 1 and Level 2 sample tests. See if you can see where marks are awarded for finding and selecting information. Where will the examiner look for the evidence that you have done this? What else are marks awarded for in Task 1?