The research essay can be scary when you are struggling to find resources. Many are frustrated by the search for “high quality” sources. Here are some places that you should consider looking into when researching for your essay.

- **Google, Yahoo, and Wikipedia** seem to be the go-to places where students first find information. Some teachers warn: “NO Wikipedia!” and for good reason—there are many contributors, so it isn’t that reliable. However, there usually is a treasure chest of sources listed toward the bottom of articles or Wikipedia pages referencing previously written articles. This is a great place to track down some good sources.

- **Encyclopedias and/or Dictionaries** are also common places to start. You may think, “Define the issue,” which is a good way for you to better grasp the context of your topic, but readers need to hear your concept of the issue, not Webster’s definition. Encyclopedias often provide their sources (which you can mine) at the end of each section.

- **Popular magazines** are also places where students go first, mainly because they are a familiar source to find what’s going on in the world. Take care which ones you choose; for example, the local gossip magazine will be less reliable than a magazine that specializes in your field of study, such as The Economist.

- **News** can be helpful to your essay because current information is valuable; however, consider the differences between less reputable sources (such as those with alien articles) to more reliable news sources. Be cautious, even while using reputable news sources, as some news sources have political leanings, and may be biased and thereby unreliable.

- **Databases** are fantastic places to pursue sources for your topic. Databases offer various journals that specialize in your field of study. These journals offer what you are looking for—peer-reviewed journal articles, which are VERY good sources to use in research essays. The abstract to a journal article will give you a quick overview of the content, so you can choose quickly whether or not this source will be helpful.

- **The school library** offers students access to databases through their search engine, through which you can search by title, subject, author, etc., to find books that might help. Books can be found not only within the building, but can be quickly shipped to you through the interlibrary loan system and Link+.

- **Research librarians** are research experts whose training is specific to finding relevant and credible sources, showing you where to begin your search, as well as how to search.

- **The Library of Congress** has a helpful index that will aid you in finding reliable sources. For example, they provide access to archival information (papers, articles, & special collections), the law library (such as finding the actual legislation that you may be arguing about), as well as various manuscripts, maps, periodicals, historical narratives, and more.

- **Your Professor** (or TA) is one of the most underestimated sources for your topic; spend some office hour time with this person discussing potential sources. Never be afraid to ask for help.