LexisNexis® Academic Research Guides
Common Writing 101/Freshman Forum Assignments

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If you have trouble accessing the LexisNexis Academic database, contact one of your school librarians. If they need to speak with someone at LexisNexis, please have them call 1-800-227-9597, ext. 54846.

Quite possibly, your first encounter with LexisNexis Academic will occur during your freshman English or Writing course. Sometimes, these are not only the courses that teach you new techniques, but those that introduce you to college paper-writing protocol. A Freshman English or Writing class is a requirement in most colleges or universities for this exact reason – to advance students’ research and writing skills from a high-school to university level.

In this research guide, you will find search strategies and examples for the most common assignments given during a Writing 101/Freshman Forum course.

See the following pages for the User Guides included:

1. Finding News Articles on Current Events
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Find News Articles on Current Events:

If your professor asks you to find news articles on current events, LexisNexis Academic is a great place to start. With over 3,000 newspapers from all over the world – including long archives of both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, this assignment will be easy! Start with the Hot Topics links. If the topic you wish to search on is not listed, just type it into the main search box.

**Hot Topics Links**

Simply visit Academic at http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic

Then, click one of the topical links shown. The first link will always retrieve the Front Page News stories from newspapers all over the world.

**Main Search Box**

**Search Strategy:**

1. Type your subject in the search box, in this case “Michelle Obama.”
2. Restrict your date range to the previous week or two weeks
3. Deselect other content options and focus on Newspapers only
4. Click Apply
5. Click Search
Find News Articles Published on Your Birth Date:

Learning how to research is an important part of your Writing 101/ Freshman Forum course. This exercise will help you get familiar with how research databases work. You can also learn some fun facts about the time period in which you were born. LexisNexis Academic contains newspaper archives that go back to the 1970s.

Search Strategy:

1. Click on the Advanced Options section on the main Academic Search box. Then, enter your birth date in as mm/dd/yyyy. The example above shows August 2, 1992 or 08/02/1992.
2. Deselect all other Content Type options, except for Newspapers.
3. Click Apply.
4. Click Search.

This search will likely retrieve thousands of results. If that’s the case, think about narrowing your search by a topic or specific newspaper like The New York Times.
Find Critical Reviews:

Learning how to write in a critical, yet constructive manner is another important part of your Freshman Forum/Writing 101 class. The best way to learn how to critique a work is to read other critical reviews. The All News form in LexisNexis Academic will guide you directly to this type of content.

Search Strategy:

1. Select All News from the Search By Content Type menu
2. Type in the title of the work you would like to see a critical review of – in this example, the books in the “Hunger Games” series
3. Select the appropriate type of review from the “Article Type” section. In this case, “Book Reviews” are selected since The Hunger Games are a series of books. If you would like to see movie reviews for the movie versions, select Movie Reviews.
4. Click Apply
5. Click Search
Write an Editorial or Opinion Piece:

Learning how to properly form and express opinions in your writing is extremely important. Start this process by finding current editorial and opinion pieces in major newspapers. Seeing examples of editorial writing will teach you how to express your own ideas and support your hypotheses with factual evidence.

Search Strategy:

1. Select All News from the Search By Content Type menu
2. Type your topic of choice. In this case, “health care”
3. Click the Advanced Options section
4. Narrow your date to the previous week
5. Check “Editorials & Opinions” to narrow your search to editorial and opinion pieces only.
6. Click Apply
7. Click Search
Filtering News Results:

Research usually starts with a broad search that returns thousands of results. In order to narrow this hit-list down to a more manageable size, check out the post-search filtering options in LexisNexis Academic.

After you run a search in LexisNexis Academic, the Results Groups Cluster will appear on the left of the results list, just as this image shows. Use this to filter your results.

Click on the “+” icons to expand the lists, narrowing to what you find most relevant to your research.

For example, if you would like to see results from only “The New York Times” – click on the “Publication Name” group and then, click on “The New York Times.”

Use the “Subject” filter to narrow your results to include other major subjects, beside your initial search term. For example, if you did an initial search on “Health Care” and wanted to see articles that specifically talk about the government, you can filter by the “Government & Public Administration” topic in the Subject filter.
Find Arguments For and Against Passing a Specific Piece of Federal Legislation:

This assignment takes the task in the “Finding an Editorial or Opinion Article” guide to another level. Instead of just getting a feel for what an editorial should be, this is a specific example of how opinion can affect legislation. Search the news around the time the legislation was enacted to find opinion pieces or editorials about the law. This example uses the Religious Freedom Restoration Act as an example.

Search Strategy

1. Select All News from the Search By Content Type menu
2. As in the example above, type in the name of the original Public Law (in the above example, the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act”) in quotes to search for that exact language. Then, click the Advanced Options section
3. Check the boxes next to “Editorials & Opinions” and “Letters & Comments” under the Article Type to limit your search to opinion-oriented news reports.
4. Click Apply
5. Click Search
Writing Styles:
Your Writing 101/Freshman Forum course will teach you that academic writing is structured and stylized. Professors will expect you to write your ideas and cite your research in specific ways, using a specific structure or “style.” The most popular Academic styles are: MLA, APA, and Chicago styles.

A Quick List of Writing Style Differences:
(For more info, visit the Purdue OWL Style Chart: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20110928111055_949.pdf)

MLA: Modern Language Association
• Used primarily for humanities, literature, and arts writing.
• Sources should be cited parenthetically or inside the text with the (Author Page#) format. As in, (Smith 24) If there is no author, use the first and second words of the title.
• 1-inch margins on all sides. Page numbers in the top right, ½ inch down. 12-point “legible font” like TNR or Courier. Double spaced. First lines of paragraphs are indented ½ inch. Blocks of quotes are indented on every line.

APA: American Psychological Association
• Used primarily for psychology, social sciences, and education
• Sources should be cited parenthetically or inside the text with the (Author PublicationYear) format for a general source. For a more specific part of the source, such as a quote, use the (Author, PubYear, p. ###) format. For example, (Smith, 2000, pp. 201-202)
• 1-inch margins on all sides. 12-point font in a serif style like TNR or Courier. Double spaced. First lines of paragraphs are indented ½ inch. Block quotes are indented on every line.

Chicago: Chicago Manual of Style
• Used for any type of writing, specifically for theses or dissertations.
• Sources should be cited parenthetically or inside the text with the (Author Year, Page#) format. As in, (Smith 2003, 172)
• 1-inch margins on all sides. “Legible” font in no less than 10-point, preferably 12-point. Double spaced, except for block quotes. Page numbers in page headers.
• Uses a superscript/footnote/endnote system to cite sources.
Creating a Bibliography:

After you finish researching your paper, you will need to collect quotes from reliable sources that will act as evidence to support your idea. However, you must make sure that you properly credit these reliable sources for those quotes and not plagiarize. Each professor may have different preferences when it comes to bibliography pages, but you can start with the Bibliographic Export tool on LexisNexis Academic to get the correct citation information.

1. Click the Bibliographic Export Icon
2. Select “Display Bibliographic Information” (Optional. If you have a RefWorks Subscription or would like to plug the metadata into an alternate Citation Generator, select either of those options.)
3. Select a style.
4. Copy and Paste. As the disclaimer states, be sure to check the accuracy of the format.

A great resource to validate citation accuracy is the Purdue Online Writing Lab: http://owl.english.purdue.edu

Remember that Bibliographic Citations will be formatted differently depending on which style of writing you are using at the time and the type of resource you’re citing. Be sure to look at your course syllabus, which usually contains information like which style the professor would like you to use.