Conducting Research

The hardest part about starting your Mission Folder can be selecting a topic to research and forming a hypothesis. Start by narrowing down and selecting which Mission Challenge interests your team the most. Use the Internet and supplemental research to learn facts and important information on different topics. Take the information you researched to brainstorm with your team and come up with problems in your community that relate to your selected Mission Challenge.

If your team is stuck, try asking a CyberGuide on the Discussion Forums on the website. Your team may also contact Mission Control to request a Private Chat with a CyberGuide for a more detailed discussion.

Reliable Internet Sources

As you use the Internet to begin your research, it's important to investigate the source of the information to make sure it is valid and reliable.

Author- Validate the credentials of the author
- In most cases, you should stay away from online information that does not list an author

URL - Determine the reliability of the organization through the URL
- Educational institutions end in .edu
- Reliable government sites end in .gov
- Non-profits end in .org, but be aware that these sites can be political/biased in nature

Online Journals and Magazines
- Reputable online journals should contain a bibliography for every article. The list of sources within that bibliography should be extensive and should include scholarly, non-Internet sources.

News Sources
- Every television and print news source has a website. Think of them as a stepping stone to more reliable sources.

Citing your Sources

Your team will need to list all resources you used to conduct your research, including websites, books, magazines, community resources and experts.
For a printed source, such as a book, magazine or encyclopedia, you should write down:
- Author name
- Title of publication
- Date of publication
- Publishing company
- Volume number of magazine or printed encyclopedia
- Page number(s)

For a website, you should write down:
- Author/editor names
- Title of page
- Company/organization who posted web page
- Web address (URL)
- Last date looked at the page

The bibliographic information for different types of resources is located in different places, some teams may need to do a little detective work to get all of the information that a bibliography requires. Teams should look in the following places:

- Title page of a book, encyclopedia or dictionary
- Heading of an article
- Front, second or editorial page of the newspaper
- Contents page of a journal or magazine
- Header (at the top) or footer (at the bottom) of a website
- About or the contact page of a website

There are standards for documenting sources of information and even though different publications may use a slightly different format for the bibliography, they all contain the same basic information.

A common format followed in many high schools is the Modern Language Association (MLA) format. Most libraries will carry copies of the MLA handbook and there are numerous sources available online for students to utilize. For an example on MLA format, click here.