

In this writing lab activity sheet, you can find tools to help support you as you start preparing, researching, and organizing for your contexts project (CP). **Activity 1** asks you to organize information you already have and facilitates starting writing your paper. **Activity 2** helps you find and use sources online to use as evidentiary support. **Activity 3** walks you through reading a source in more detail.

# Activity 1 - Prewriting

The CP asks students to contextualize a social issue, phenomenon, or event. The assignment is geared towards building research skills. Whether or not you have a topic chosen, this activity asks you to think deeply about a topic that you can build upon for this project and the next one.

1. What was the most engaging lecture or discussion you’ve had in class so far? What was interesting about it? How could this connect to a larger social issue?
2. What do you already know about your chosen topic (social issue), without doing any research?
3. Who can you talk with about your topic? A family member, friend, teacher?
4. What are some opinions you’ve heard, read, or seen about your topic? How is this topic generally treated by news outlets? By social media?
5. How long has this social issue been of interest to you? How long has this social issue been debated or discussed in society?

#

# Activity 2 - Source Evaluations

This activity aims to help you practice finding and identifying usable research information to use in your paper. Across different search engines of your choosing, enter at least two keywords that relate to your topic/social issue in parenthesis. You may want to use more specific keywords or filters, such as specifying the date or type of content. Read the introduction and conclusion (in a book, this may mean just the first five pages; in an article, this may mean the first and last page) and select a quote to write down. One example of this process is listed below.

**Topic:** Gun Violence

**Keywords:** “guns” “violence” “america”

| **Search Engine** | **Title** | **Author, Publisher, Date** | **Quote (page #)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Google | What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S. | John GramlichPew Research CenterApril 26, 2023 | In 2021, the most recent year for which complete data is available, 48,830 people died from gun-related injuries in the U.S., according to the CDC |
| Google Scholar | Point blank: Guns and violence in America | Gary KleckRoutledge2017 | The gun debate has been unusually statistically oriented, perhaps because intelligent adherents on both sides recognize that most of the key questions are not a matter of *whether* certain costs and benefits are produced by gun control or gun ownership, but rather a matter of *how much* cost or benefit there is, and for how many people.  |
| UCI Library | Rhetoric and Guns | Lydia Wilkes, Nate Kreuter, Ryan SkinnellUtah State University Press2022 | From its beginning, gun ownership and use has been inextricably tied to gendered and racialized violence perpetrated primarily by white male European settler-colonists against Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). This foundational gendered, racialized violence enacted through firearms has never ceased. (5) |

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Keywords:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

| **Search Engine** | **Title** | **Author, Publisher, Date** | **Quote (page #)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

# Activity 3 - Reading Responses

This activity walks you through how to read (or watch) smarter, not harder. For each source you’ve collected, walk through the steps listed below.

1. Have you created a citation in the appropriate style? This is usually in MLA or APA–ask your instructor.
2. What type of source is this? Should you use it in your paper? Sources are often popular (newspaper, social media) or academic (written by professors or researchers). It can be hard to tell if a book is popular or academic; look up the author and try to find their credentials, such as if they have a Ph.D. or Master’s. Popular sources are best used as *examples* of popular opinions and discussion around a topic. Academic sources are best for evidence. Popular sources like Wikipedia should not be used in your writing, although they may be helpful to read.
3. What is the most important sentence in the introduction? In the conclusion? In a book, an introduction and conclusion are separate chapters. We don’t expect you to read the whole book, but you should read the introduction, a chapter of interest, and the conclusion. When skimming to see if this is a source you want to read at all, treat the introduction chapter like an article, where you read the first and last paragraphs for the higher-level takeaways to determine if it’s useful to your topic.
4. How do the identified main ideas from this source relate to your topic? Do they reinforce one position on the social issue over another? Do you have a balanced set of resources that cover multiple opinions?