Library Tips for First Year Students
-- Margaret Fulford, University College Librarian, Fall 2011

Tip # 1: Ask librarians for help.
- Don’t be shy -- we welcome your questions!
- Drop by a library "reference desk" to get research help (e.g. at Robarts Library, 4th floor).
- Help is also available by phone, chat, or e-mail (go to www.library.utoronto.ca, click HELP).

Tip # 2: Know what kinds of sources your professor expects you to use.
- Does your professor want you to use academic (scholarly) journal articles? Books?
- Are newspaper or magazine articles acceptable/unacceptable sources for the assignment?
- Are websites acceptable sources? (Are they authoritative? scholarly? trustworthy? biased?)

Tip # 3: Start your research at the U of T libraries home page (www.library.utoronto.ca).
- A good place to find scholarly e-resources (people can’t get these for free on the Web, but as a U of T student you have free access with your UTORid).
- For books, search the Catalogue. You can "refine results" by library, subject, language, etc.
- To do a quick search for articles, click the "Articles" tab; to do a more thorough search for articles, see Tip # 4.
- You can also search "All" to get some catalogue results and some article results.

Tip # 4: Find the best databases for your topic.
- Click "Subjects A-Z" and select your broad topic (e.g., Biology or Economics or Canada).
- You'll find useful article databases, as well as research guides and online encyclopedias.

Tip # 5: Browse different libraries to find your favourite study spaces.
- U of T has dozens of libraries. You can study at almost all of them (and borrow books too).
- Our largest libraries are Robarts (humanities and social sciences) and Gerstein (sciences).
- We also have college libraries, and libraries for specific subjects like Music, Law, and Math.

Tip # 6: Go from the general to the specific.
E.g.: (1) encyclopedia article to get the context? .... (2) chapter or section in a more general book? ... (3) book on your topic? ... (4) journal articles on a specific aspect of your topic?

Tip # 7: Use "my account" to renew your books and keep track of your loans.
- At most libraries, you can renew 3 times, unless someone else has requested the book.
- Know when your books are due (those overdue fines can add up).

Tip # 8: Don’t leave your research until the last minute.
- With lead time, you can follow trails (a book or article may lead you to another); place holds on books that are out; and even request interlibrary loans for items U of T doesn't own.

Tip # 9: Request books from the suburbs and books that are checked out.
- Click Request Item in the catalogue (1) to get books from the UTM and UTSC libraries or Downsview (off-site storage); (2) to place a hold on a book that’s checked out. (For Robarts books with far-off due dates, you can also go to the Loans Desk and ask for a "recall").

Tip # 10: If you haven't already, get your TCard and activate your UTORid.
- You'll need your TCard to borrow books (up to 50 at once!), write exams, pay for printing ...
- You'll need your UTORid to use U of T wireless or library computers, view library e-resources from off campus, get your U of T e-mail, log in to the Portal for your courses ...