



Information, Data and Media Literacy

Video transcript

3.6 Seeking out help

When studying, we're often working alone and feel under pressure to cope with everything ourselves. If we then feel we're not able to perform an academic task without help, this undermines our self-esteem.

Paradoxically, we often don't accept help just exactly when we do need it because we're embarrassed or it feels like a defeat. And even if we'd like to find help, that's not always easy.

We can use a series of decisions and actions to guide us efficiently when seeking academic help.

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First we have to be aware that we lack some knowledge or understanding. Otherwise we'll never realize that we need to get help in the first place. And the earlier we notice this, the better – preferably not after we've already failed a seminar paper.

Therefore we should continually reflect on our progress and on our knowledge gaps.

Even if we are aware that we need some support, it can be difficult to decide to seek out help. Many students give up a course or studying altogether rather than consider other strategies because they believe they have to do it on their own. But seeking help is an entirely legitimate thing to do. In fact, purposefully making use of external resources and services counts as part of academic competence.

Universities and university libraries offer a wide variety of services to support many aspects of studying: for example advice on how to write essays, research support, courses on reference management programs or free software solutions.

It's not only important that we seek help, it's also important that we seek out the right help. Help could simply mean using external resources. For example, some problems might be solved by watching tutorials on YouTube. Other problems might require input from other people, such as getting someone to read through a term paper or consulting a lecturer. There are also problems where specific services offered by the university can help.

First of all we need to decide what sort of help our problem requires.

So, we now know that we need help and what sort of help we require. Next we need to decide what person or institution to approach. This will depend on how quickly we need help, who can provide help fastest and who is the most competent to provide support. Typical people to approach would be friends, a study group, lecturers or tutors. Typical institutions are libraries, advice centers and student self-help groups.



And of course, we don't have to limit ourselves to just a single source of help.

Depending on what sort of help we decide on, we should prepare ourselves beforehand. For example, before a meeting with a lecturer, we could draw up a list of specific questions that we'd like answered.

Being well prepared and clear about what we need will also mean that the help we get will be better too.

Finally, we will gain the most benefit if we subsequently process the help received. This could be as simple as afterwards reviewing the notes we jotted down during a meeting. We should also think about any advice that we received. What did I learn? How can I apply it? How can I change my work behavior? Do I need to make any immediate changes?

By proceeding step-by-step in this way, we'll find it much easier to seek help and make good use of external resources.