



The National Archives  
Education Service

## Independent Research

Preparation materials for  
onsite workshop (KS 5)

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## Teacher's notes

This pack will enable you to prepare your students for this Independent Research session. It is vital that you read the information and return all necessary paperwork to ensure that students get the most from the visit.

Our Independent Research session prepares students for searching, ordering, handling and analysing original documents. It also gives students an insight into the role of archives and the challenges of preserving historical records. In this session, students will:

- Receive an introductory tour of 'The Keeper's Gallery';
- Discuss how to analyse and interpret archival material through examining an original document;
- Explore the catalogue and be advised on searching for documents;
- Learn how to reserve a seat in the reading room;
- Receive a guided tour of the reading room areas.

## Teacher preparation

It is essential that we receive all forms and paperwork for this session. Some of these forms must be submitted three weeks in advance of the visit. A full checklist for teachers and students has been provided. Please note that missing paperwork or failure to bring valid identification will prevent us from issuing one-day Student Reader Tickets.

In advance of the visit, we advise teachers to ensure that all students have a topic, date range and knowledge of related individuals and events. An enquiry question and conceptual focus may also be useful in guiding students' research on the day.

- Example: 'English Civil War'; 1625-1649; Cromwell, Strafford, Archbishop Laud, Fairfax; Treaty of Newport, Arrest of 5 MPs, Grand Remonstrance; 'Why did the English execute their king?'; causation.

Teachers should also set students the preparation task provided in this pack. Its purpose is to familiarise students with The National Archives' catalogue, *Discovery*, and for students to gather references in advance of their visit. This will allow more time for examining original documents on the day.

## Background information

The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice. It is home to millions of historical government and public records, such as letters, reports, minutes, registers, maps, photographs, films, digital files and sound recordings. Spanning over 1,000 years, these records offer a fascinating perspective on people and events in history.

## Useful links

Begin searching for documents on our catalogue:

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/>

Discover our online records:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/our-online-records.htm>

Keep up to date with the latest releases at The National Archives:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/latest-releases.htm>

## Teacher's notes (continued)

Listen to an expert with our audio and video podcasts:

<http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Learn how to read old records, learn Latin, or cite documents in written work:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/reading-old-documents.htm>

Follow The National Archives' blog:

<http://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

# Check list for teachers and students

## Check list for teachers

At least 3 weeks in advance of the session, teachers must:

- Email a list of full names of all students attending, along with the school name and visit date to [Reader.Registration@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:Reader.Registration@nationalarchives.gov.uk).
- Ensure that each student has registered online for a one-day Student Reader Ticket, using the dedicated link enclosed in your booking confirmation email.  
*Please note that teachers are not eligible for a one-day Reader Ticket.*
- Register for a three-year Reader Ticket (recommended).  
*Teachers can choose to register for a three-year Reader Ticket. Register in advance or on the day of the session: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/login/yourdetails>. Teachers without a Reader Ticket can enter the Reading Room area and access online and microfilm documents, but cannot order original documents or enter the document-viewing area.*

On the day of the session, teachers must bring:

- A headed letter from the school for each individual student, identifying them by name as a student of that school;  
*This is essential as it acts as proof of address for students. We advise that teachers distribute the letters to students during the session.*
- Two different forms of identification: one proof of name; one proof of address.  
*This is only required for teachers intending to register for a three-year Reader Ticket. Please consult this list for accepted forms of identification: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/readers-ticket.htm>*

## Check list for students

In advance of the session, students must:

- Register online for a one-day Reader Ticket at least three weeks ahead of the session.  
*Make a note of the identification you provide during registration. On the day of your visit, you will need to show this identification to a member of the Education team to receive a one-day Reader Ticket. Photocopies of identification will not be accepted.*
- Complete the student preparation task.

On the day of the session, students must bring:

- The form of identification submitted during online registration.
- A list of document references to order – see 'Student preparation task'.  
*There is only one copy of each document available to view in the Reading Rooms, so have enough references to choose from in case the document you wish to order is in use by another reader.*

# Student preparation task

Dear Student

We are looking forward to welcoming you to The National Archives. Millions of documents are held here, and this short task will help you discover those that interest you most. Your task is set out for you in four stages, and does not have to be completed all at once. Once you have completed this task, you will:

- know how to use The National Archives' catalogue to search for documents;
- have at least three document references to bring on the day of your visit, which you will use to order and view documents in our Reading Rooms.

## Stage 1: Deciding your research topic

Students usually research a topic for an exam or an extended essay; however your teacher may be happy for you to pursue another area of interest. If your topic is broad, for example, covering over 50 or 100 years, select a narrower set of dates and a particular theme to explore; this will make your research more focused and manageable. Before continuing to Stage 2, ensure that you have decided the following:

- Overall topic (eg. *The Making of Modern Britain, 1951-2007*);
- Research question (*How far did life improve for people in post-war Britain?*);
- Focused date range (*1950-1960*);
- Individuals/events (*Harold Macmillan, Festival of Britain, end of rationing*);
- Potential themes (*housing, immigration, employment, youth culture*).

If you are unsure of a topic to pursue, your teacher can advise you.

## Stage 2: Seeing what's out there already!

Finding references can be challenging; however sometimes the hard work has already been done for you! Before searching for references yourself, find out what researchers have already found on your topic, by following the suggestions below. Remember, not every link will bring up something relevant to you.

Looking for a Subject?:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-subject/default.htm>

Research Guides: Search topics by letter:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/atoz/>

Your Archives A-Level Resources:

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Category:A\\_level\\_resources](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Category:A_level_resources)

Our digitised records, which include Cabinet Papers, Design Registers, and Foreign and Commonwealth Office photographs:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/catalogues-and-online-records.htm>

Education's focussed topics page:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/sessions-and-resources/?resource-type=focussed-topics>

Look at footnotes of published books and articles on your topic for references beginning 'PRO' or 'TNA'.

# Student preparation task (continued)

## Stage 3: Searching *Discovery*

Even if you have found lots of references using the links above, now search our catalogue, *Discovery*, to see what you can find yourself. We keep so many documents that some have not been seen for centuries, and it is only through people doing their own research that new and exciting discoveries are made. Use the following link to access *Discovery* and read the tips below to guide your search:

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/>.

Think carefully about what you type into *Discovery*

- *Cold War* brings up over 250 results, many irrelevant; “*Cold War*” in speech marks searches it as a phrase, and brings up around 80 results, mostly relevant.
- Being more focused can sometimes help Eg. ~~*Cold War*~~ “*Berlin Blockade*”.
- What did people call things then? Eg. ~~*Jack the Ripper*~~ “*Whitechapel Murders*”.
- Broaden the search options, eg. *Russia\** *revolution* will search *Russia/Russian revolution*. The use of \* can also be useful for words which have numerous possible spellings.

Start with a broad search and then refine it. Below is an example:

View and edit ‘Your refinements’

The screenshot shows the National Archives Discovery search interface. The search bar contains 'policing northern ireland'. The results show 1 - 15 of 40 results sorted by Relevance. A sidebar on the left, titled 'Your refinements', lists several filters: Armed Forces (general), Crime, Weapons, Prisons, and 1950+. A 'Refine results' button is visible at the bottom of the sidebar. The main search results area shows a list of documents, including one titled 'Police stations in Northern Ireland: protection. Proposed use of UDR. Availability of automatic weapons. Discussions ...'. The document details include: Collection: Records created or inherited by the Northern Ireland Office; Date range: 07 June 1971 - 15 September 1972; Reference: CJ 4/148; Subjects: Ireland, Armed Forces (General), Weapons.

‘Refine results’ by collection, subject or date

Typing ‘policing Northern Ireland’ produces over 400 results. The ‘Refine results’ options can narrow this search, for example by ‘Subject’ and ‘Date’. Look at the screenshot above to see how ‘Your refinements’ has been used to narrow a search from 400 to 40 results.

## Stage 4: Preparation for your visit

Now that you have completed the stages above, you should have a clear research focus, and at least three references for documents you would like to view in the Reading Rooms. Please bring a list of the references you have found to the session. You may also be asked to briefly reflect on your experiences of searching for documents.

## Frequently asked questions:

### Can students visit The National Archives without a teacher/adult?

Yes, students aged 16+ may independently visit The National Archives and register for a three-year Reader Ticket to access original documents. Students participating in a session delivered by Education staff must be accompanied by at least two adults, even if they are 18 years old. After the session, students may remain onsite and access public areas at The National Archives independently of teachers/adults.

### How long will students have to conduct independent research?

Teachers determine how long students have to conduct research, depending on the amount of time you allow after the session finishes. The session lasts one and a half hours, during which time students will have ordered three documents. Please note that it takes up to 40 minutes for documents to be delivered. You may also wish to consult our opening hours, and document ordering and reader registration times:

Day	Opening hours	Document ordering and reader registration times
Monday	Closed	Closed
Tuesday	09.00-19.00	09.00-17.00
Wednesday	09.00-17.00	09.00-16.15
Thursday	09.00-19.00	09.00-17.00
Friday	09.00-17.00	09.00-16.15
Saturday	09.00-17.00	09.00-16.15
Sunday	Closed	Closed

### What can I bring to The National Archives?

This list tells you what you can and cannot take into the Reading Rooms. Prohibited Reading Room items can be left in lockers provided (free of charge), and are allowed in other public areas. Reading rooms are air-conditioned to maintain a suitable temperature for the documents, so bringing a jumper is advisable, even on a warm day.

Yes	No
Pencils	Pens, coloured pencils
Camera (flash turned off)	Rubbers, pencil sharpeners
Phones (on silent – for texting and photographing only)	Bags (transparent plastic bags are provided)
Bound notepads (or up to 20 loose sheets)	Drink, including water
Laptops	Coats
Reader ticket and identification	Food, including sweets and chewing gum
Purse/wallet	Gels, hand-creams or lip-salve

### Can students photograph documents?

Photography without flash is permitted, and students are welcome to bring their own devices. Cameras fixed to stands are also available in the Reading Rooms for public use. There is a small charge for printing, or images can be sent by email free of charge.

## Frequently asked questions (continued):

### Can I bring my students to The National Archives independently of the Education Service?

Yes, though only students aged 16+ will be eligible to register for three-year Reader Tickets. This can be done in advance online here: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/login/yourdetails>.

If your group comprises of 16 or more people you will need to check the group visits booking calendar and notify the group visits registration team of your visit: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/groups.htm>. Reader registration can only accommodate one large group visit per day, so it is advisable to check availability as soon as possible. We also advise that students come prepared with references. You may wish to set the student preparation task from this pack.