



The National Archives

Preparing to research

The National Archives is home to 1,000 years of government records and information. The sheer range of publicly available documents that we hold is immense – approximately 11 million.

When carrying out research, preparation is everything. There are lots of places you can go and look. Libraries can be good places to start as well as encyclopaedias and articles on the internet. Has anyone already carried out research, or written a book, magazine or newspaper article on the subject? Can you ask friends or family, or talk to anyone locally who may know something that isn't written down anywhere?

Setting important dates on a timeline, and keeping key facts like names and places in a clear, easy-to-refer-to document or file will really pay off. The better you are at organising your findings, the easier it will be to find out more information and pinpoint areas to investigate further.

Think of yourself as a detective: following up clues, reading between the lines, trying to form a picture while there are still some of the pieces missing.

Researching can be fun, if frustrating sometimes. Organising your research and coming to our website armed with key facts will make the process much more productive. So, enjoy the journey; you never know where it might lead.