Research Trail

Find reliable information and give sources credit.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.8 "Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the two search terms, circle each detail Maya uses to check a source's credibility, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside the quotation, paraphrase, and citation details.

Planning a Pollinator Garden

(1) To plan a pollinator garden at school, Maya began with a focused search. Instead of typing "bees," she searched "native flowering plants pollinators site:.gov" and "pollinator garden native plants university extension." The results led her to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service page and a university extension guide. Both sources matched her question about plants, not just insects. Maya recorded each page's author, organization, publication date, title, URL, and the date she viewed it. These details would help her find the sources again and build citations.

(2) Before using the sources, Maya checked their credibility. The wildlife agency page named its federal organization and linked to related conservation information. The extension guide identified its university program and explained which plants were native to its region. Maya also found a garden-store blog, but it gave no author or evidence for its claim that one flower attracts every pollinator. She did not use that claim. A source can be useful only when its author, publisher, evidence, and connection to the research question can be checked.

(3) Maya wanted to use a sentence from the agency page. She copied these exact words inside quotation marks: "Pollinators are responsible for assisting over 80% of the world's flowering plants to reproduce" (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). She then restated the extension guide's idea in her own words: Native plants fit local conditions and can provide food for pollinators. Her paraphrase did not copy the guide's sentence structure, and she still named the source. In her Works Cited list, Maya used MLA-style entries with author or organization, page title, website, date, URL, and access date.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why were Maya's search terms more useful than simply searching for "bees"?

2. Which source did Maya decide not to use? Give two reasons from the passage that made it less credible.

3. How did Maya avoid plagiarism when she used information from the extension guide?

4. Name four details Maya included in an MLA-style Works Cited entry.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a question about a school topic and locate two credible print or digital sources. Write 4 to 5 sentences that state your question, give two precise search terms, name both sources with a credibility reason, and paraphrase information from one source with an MLA-style in-text citation. Then write a complete MLA-style Works Cited entry for each source.

ANSWER KEY

Research Trail

GRADE 7 · W.7.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the two search terms, circle each detail Maya uses to check a source's credibility, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside the quotation, paraphrase, and citation details. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why were Maya's search terms more useful than simply searching for "bees"?	**They used specific words about native flowering plants and pollinator gardens, and they targeted government and university extension sources that matched her research question.**
2	Which source did Maya decide not to use? Give two reasons from the passage that made it less credible.	**She did not use the garden-store blog because it had no named author and no evidence for its claim.**
3	How did Maya avoid plagiarism when she used information from the extension guide?	**She restated the idea in her own words without copying the guide's sentence structure, and she named the source.**
4	Name four details Maya included in an MLA-style Works Cited entry.	**Any four: author or organization, page title, website, date, URL, and access date.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My question is, How can our cafeteria waste less food? I would search "EPA school cafeteria food waste prevention" and "school food waste audit university extension." I would use the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Loss and Waste page because both are published by federal agencies. The EPA hierarchy places preventing food waste before recycling or disposal (United States, Environmental Protection Agency). Our cafeteria could track untouched food and prepare smaller batches. Works Cited United States, Department of Agriculture. "Food Loss and Waste." USDA, www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste. Accessed 4 Aug. 2026. United States, Environmental Protection Agency. "Food Recovery Hierarchy." United States Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-hierarchy. Accessed 4 Aug. 2026.

Accept equivalent explanations that use passage evidence. For Part 3, accept different topics and citation styles if the student uses two relevant credible sources, explains credibility, clearly paraphrases rather than copies, and gives enough citation information to locate both sources.