



**Preplanning** is essential to creating a good Track. It saves you time later on, and helps you make a better Track. You may want to save links and annotations in a word processing program as you plan.

## Preplanning your Track

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### Planning Track content

Before you begin to make your track, decide on the main idea of your track and what questions you want to answer by visiting links on your topic.

### Checking Tracks that are already online

Once you have a topic in mind, you might want to see if there are any other Tracks already on the topic. There may be tracks that already meet your needs, or a track that you could modify to meet your needs.

### Choosing a descriptive title

Trackstar uses key words in Track titles for its search engine. To make your Track easy to find, use a descriptive phrase in your title. For example, use "Minority Reporting in the US Census" rather than "The Census". Focusing on a specific topic will improve the quality of your track and make it easier to title.

### Writing a useful description of your Track

Writing a brief but thorough description will help others use your Track. Include a concise description of your lesson, the age or grade for which it's intended, the subject (such as science or art), any state standards that it meets, and details that might differentiate it from similar Tracks. Many people judge the content of a Track by its description, so more people are likely to use your Track if you provide a good description.

You may use HTML in this section, but it is not necessary. The TrackStar search engine will search Track descriptions for key words as well.

### Searching for useful links

To explore online resources available on your topic, enter keywords into a search engine like [Profusion](#) or [Metacrawler](#). To search for words that appear together on Web sites, like *Census 2000*, enter the terms in quotes, like this: "census 2000". To learn more about search engines, use the help file in your favorite search engine.

### Organizing your links

As you search for links, collect them by cutting and pasting the addresses into a word processor document like MS Word or Claris Works. To do this, open one of these word processors alongside your browser. In the browser, highlight the URL (address) of the

site you want, select Edit --> Copy. Then click on the window of your word processor , and select Edit --> Paste. Be sure to type a title for each link as well, so you will remember the names of the sites. Collecting links this way prevents you from mistyping a long Internet address.

Once you have collected your links, organize them in your word processor in the order you wish them to appear in your track. Then write [annotations](#), or directions that tell students or visitors what to look for or accomplish when visiting each link in your track. After you've organized links and written annotations in your word processor, spell check your work.

Doing all of this before you start to "make a Track" online will really speed up the process and leave less room for error.

### **Creating annotations for your links**

Annotations are directions that tell students or visitors what to look for or accomplish when visiting each link in your track. The best annotations include directions for: where to look on the accompanying page, what to look for, and a variety of questions from basic knowledge all the way to synthesis of information. Well-written annotations provide direction in clear, easy-to-follow steps. When we select Top Tracks or Tracks to feature in [Premier Tracks](#), we look for Tracks that help students discover, identify, understand, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate different topics. We also look for creative teaching approaches and unique uses of TrackStar.

### **Building your own Web page (if you're a teacher)**

If you want to make an original Web page to include in your Track, you can do it at HPR\*TEC's [Web Worksheet Wizard](#), a tool for teachers.

### **Building your own Web page (if you're a student)**

If you want to make an original Web page to include in your Track, you can do it at HPR\*TEC's [Project Poster](#), a tool for students.

### **Making a quiz for your Track**

If you want to create a custom online quiz to include in your Track, you can do it at HPR\*TEC's [Quiz Star](#).

This page is [Bobby Approved](#).

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