

The Savvy Researcher's Inca Empire Checklist

Phase 1: Laying the Foundation

- **Start Broad:** Begin with a recent, high-quality encyclopedia entry to understand the key names, dates, and terms (e.g., *Sapa Inca*, *Tawantinsuyu*, *mita*, *kipu*).
- **Read a "Gateway" Book:** Choose *one* popular narrative history (like *The Last Days of the Incas*) to get the story and *one* comprehensive academic overview (like D'Altroy's *The Incas*) to get the facts.
- **Define Your Question:** Don't just read about "the Incas." Get specific. Are you interested in their engineering, their religion, the conquest, or their economy? Write down your specific question.

Phase 2: Gathering Your Sources (The Hunt)

- **Check Your Library:** Log in to your local or university library's online portal *first*. Check their access to databases like JSTOR, Project MUSE, and ProQuest.
- **Master Google Scholar:**
 - Use specific phrases in quotes (e.g., "Inca road system").
 - Use the "Cited by" button to find newer research that references a classic work.
 - Look for ".edu" or "repository" links for free PDF versions (open access).
- **Use Open Access Directories:** Search DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) and Archive.org for free-to-read, peer-reviewed articles and out-of-copyright classic books.
- **Mine Bibliographies:** When you find a perfect article, immediately go to its bibliography. This is your *best* source for finding the other key experts on that exact topic.

Phase 3: Organizing Your Library (The System)

- **Use a Reference Manager:** Download Zotero or Mendeley (they're free). Install the browser connector.
- **"One-Click" Saving:** As you find sources, click the browser button to save the PDF and all citation info directly to your manager.
- **Tag Everything:** Don't just use folders. Use specific tags.
 - *Examples:* #ToRead, #Khipu, #Cusco, #PrimarySource, #Archaeology, #Murra (Author).
- **Take Smart Notes:** Use the "Notes" feature *inside* your reference manager. Write a 2-sentence summary of the article's main argument and why it matters to *your* question.

Phase 4: Critical Reading (The Analysis)

- **Check the Date:** Is this from 1970 or 2020? The interpretation of the anthropology of the Incas has changed dramatically.
- **Ask "Who?":** Who is the author? Are they a historian, an archaeologist, a journalist? What is their bias? (e.g., Is it a Spanish chronicler justifying the conquest?)
- **Cross-Reference:** Never trust a single source. If you read a wild claim, find *at least* two other high-quality research sources that either support or challenge it.