

### The Research Paper

There are seven basic steps to writing a research paper:

1. Selecting and limiting the subject, then writing the statement of purpose.
2. Preparing a working bibliography - a list of available sources.
3. Preparing a preliminary outline.
4. Reading and taking notes.
5. Assembling notes and writing the main outline.
6. Writing the first draft.
7. Writing the revised final draft with works cited and the bibliography.

Step one: Selecting and limiting the subject.

1. Select a subject which is interesting to you and suitable for research from the sources you have available.
2. In a small way, you are to become an authority on the subject you choose; so pick a topic which will hold your interest.
3. The best kind of subject is one on which information can be found in many different sources. Your subject must be sufficiently limited so that it can be adequately treated within the scope of your paper. It is better to go deeply into a narrow subject rather than treat superficially a broad one.
  - A. Before choosing your topic, you should know how long your research paper is going to be. For this project, the paper length is 3-5 pages, typed, double spaced.
  - B. Limiting your topic must be done with reference to your purpose. A statement of purpose is a one-sentence statement that will help you keep clear as you plan and write.

Step two: Preparing a working bibliography

1. Use library tools to look up available sources of information. Start with a package of 3x5 cards. Using the OPAC, the internet and other appropriate reference books, compile a list of all books, articles, and internet sites which promise to be useful to you.
2. Place only one source to a card. You must write on the card the complete information about the source.

#### Books

1. Call numbers in the upper left corner
2. Author or editor (ed. after last name)
3. Title (volume, if necessary)
4. Place of publication
5. Publisher
6. Year of publication

#### Magazine or Newspaper article

1. Author
2. Title of Magazine or Newspaper
3. Name of article
4. Volume and page number
5. Date

#### Media Source

1. Author (first and last name)
  2. Title of the complete work
  3. Format (internet, video, interview, tv or radio program)
  4. Source (web address, producer)
  5. Date of access or publication
3. At the conclusion of Step 2, you will have a stack of cards - a working bibliography, representing sources you plan to read. Number the cards clearly in the upper right corner.
  4. For this paper you must have a minimum of 10 sources in your working bibliography - 5 internet, 3 printed, and 2 other sources (interviews, videos)

Step three: Preparing a preliminary outline.

1. You should have some idea of the topics on which you will need information. Use your statement of purpose to get started.

2. Another way to approach this outline is to anticipate questions that your paper needs to answer. This is a guide for your note taking. As your reading suggests new topics, insert them in the outline; as you find that some of your topics cannot or should not be treated in your paper, remove them from the outline.

#### Step four: Reading and taking notes

1. The notes you take should fall under a topic in your outline. At the top of each note card write the outline topic with which the note deals. This topic is called a “slug.”
2. Use a separate card for each source. In the upper right corner of the card write the number of the source as you have indicated it on the card in the working bibliography. You will need this number for the works cited and bibliography in your paper.
3. In general you should do very little copying. A research paper should not consist of a mere list of quotations. You are expected to gather facts and ideas from your sources, digest them thoroughly and write them in your own words. Quote verbatim only when the words of the source are especially important and/or especially well chosen.
4. Every idea or fact jotted down on your note card must be followed by the number of the page from which it was taken. This is done so that you will have access to this necessary information for the end notes due with the final paper.
5. The easiest way to avoid plagiarism is to take notes in bullet form. Write down just short phrases or words to help you remember the information when it’s time to write.

#### Step five: Assemble your notes and write the final outline

1. If you are satisfied that you have enough notes to insure adequate treatment of your subject, you should undertake the task of arranging the notes in the order you will use them.
2. The first step is to assemble in one pile all cards bearing the same slug.
3. Next decide on the order of the topics.
4. The final outline will take shape readily as you skim through your note cards. You will find that many of your slugs will become subtopics, while other may become major topics. Some may be discarded. You should have no more than 4 major topics for this paper.

#### Step six: Write the first draft

1. With the outline and notes, you are ready to start.
2. Do not worry unnecessarily over mechanics in this draft. Get your ideas down first.
3. Be very careful to write in your own words or to quote the source of information. It is not necessary to give the source of information for something which is common knowledge (i.e. something found in an encyclopedia article).

#### Step seven: Write the final draft to include a title page, table of contents, works cited, and bibliography.

1. If you have done the steps as you go, this is the easy step.
2. Revise (Proofread!!), more than once to eliminate grammar errors and missing content.
3. Make sure the appearance is as directed (more instruction will follow).
4. Follow the correct format for works cited and bibliography . Specifics will come closer to the end of the assignment.