

How to Write a Research Paper

1. Select a topic for research.
 - Gather ideas through class discussion, reading, thinking, free writing, brainstorming, etc.
 - Choose a topic which interests and challenges you.
 - Narrow the topic down. Select a subject you can manage. Avoid subjects that are too complicated or for which there are not enough source materials available.
 - Get your teacher’s approval for your topic.
 - If you are not sure what is expected, reread your assignment sheet or ask your teacher.
2. Find information.
 - Use search engines to find sources online. Make sure your sources are reliable.
 - Use a card catalog to find books in the library that relate to your subject.
 - Look at other print materials available from the library—encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, etc.
 - Use note cards or a journal to write down important information along with full bibliographical information (author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, page numbers, URLs, creation or modification dates on Web pages and your date of access to the Web page).
3. Create an outline.

The purpose of the outline is to help you think through your topic carefully and organize it logically. Check your outline to make sure the points covered flow logically from one to the other. Include the following:

 - I. Introduction: State your thesis and the purpose of your research paper. Explain briefly the major points you plan to cover and why readers should be interested.
 - II. Body
 - A. Supporting Details (three or more)
 - II. Conclusion: Restate or reword your thesis. Summarize what you have learned. Explain why you have reached this conclusion.
4. Organize your notes according to your outline.
 - Choose the best of your sources.
 - Make sure your information is up-to-date and factual. (Is it backed up by at least one other source?)
 - Do not include information that is not related to your topic.
 - Do not include information that you do not understand.
 - Make sure the information you have noted is carefully recorded and properly credited.
5. Write your first draft.
 - Explore your topic without worrying about grammar, spelling or punctuation.
 - Start with the first topic in your outline. Read all the notes that relate to that topic. Summarize, paraphrase or quote directly for each idea you plan to use.
 - Make sure you are using your own words. Give credit for ideas you are borrowing or quoting.
6. Revise your outline and draft. Be your own critic.
 - Add, delete, or rearrange the material to follow your outline. Reorganize your outline if necessary, but always keep the purpose of your paper in mind.
 - Locate and correct errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure.
 - Share your writing with peers for proofreading.
8. Type your final paper.
 - Read the assignment sheet again to make sure your paper meets the requirements.
 - Proofread again for spelling, punctuation, missing words or duplicated words.
 - Make sure your final paper is clean, tidy, neat and attractive.