

# Research: How to Research, Take Notes, and Write a Research Paper

## Research Tips

1. Use the resources Centre offers. Go to the Library's website for research guides, online databases and the library's catalog. The Research Librarians are the best resource available to you.
2. Be wary of Internet searches. Analyze sources for reputable authors, periodicals, sites etc. If you would be embarrassed writing the source's name in your paper, if there is no author, or if the source contradicts other sources on the subject, it is not an acceptable for academic study.
3. For Internet, or database searches, use narrow search terms, use different synonyms of the basic key terms of your topic, and focus on using nouns as much as possible.
4. DO NOT START THE NIGHT BEFORE! Research takes a lot of time. You will need to be able to access the library (which closes at midnight on weeknights), and sifting through multiple sources takes a lot of time. Start researching as early as possible to produce the best research paper.

## The Preliminary Steps

- \_\_\_ 1. Choose a topic. Read the assignment very carefully. Ask your professor questions if you are unclear about anything.
- \_\_\_ 2. Search for sources and begin preliminary reading.
- \_\_\_ 3. Narrow the subject matter. Find a wedge into the subject in order to make an argument about it.
- \_\_\_ 4. Develop a preliminary thesis statement. What is your argument?  
(A research thesis should not set up a paper to simply restate facts, but should make an argument or claim about those facts. See "Thesis" handout.)

**The single most important step in writing a research paper is developing an argument. You are not just repeating your research findings—you are using your research as evidence to build a claim.**

## Taking Research Notes

- \_\_\_1. Take notes when doing all reading.
- \_\_\_2. Note the source and page number for easy reference.
- \_\_\_3. Copy relevant quotes, ideas, and facts.
- \_\_\_4. Make a preliminary outline. Write a working thesis and topic sentences for all main points with supporting evidence.
- \_\_\_5. Use notecards if you prefer. These will make for easy re-ordering or shuffling.
- \_\_\_6. Weed out sources. Focus on the most useful sources. Get rid of extraneous or irrelevant sources.
- \_\_\_7. Avoid plagiarism. Paraphrase when taking notes to avoid copying direct wording from sources.
- \_\_\_8. Write down every idea or question you may have while reading so that you can refer to it or research it further later.

## The Writing Process

- \_\_\_1. Revise your outline to encompass all main ideas, points, evidence, and quotes. Most of the thinking or invention should happen at this stage.
- \_\_\_2. Write an introduction that presents your argument and “hooks” your reader. The introduction should be concise and interesting. The thesis should be placed at the end of the introduction.
- \_\_\_3. Establish a logical order for your paper to follow. Make sure that all of your points flow together and make sense.
- \_\_\_4. Write out your outline. Each new idea should be constructed into a new paragraph with a topic sentence introducing the evidence.
- \_\_\_5. Use your notes and quotes as evidence to prove or support your argument. Quotes need to flow into your paper.
- \_\_\_6. Complete final bibliography.
- \_\_\_7. REVISE YOUR PAPER!