

Writing Center Handouts

How to Write a Research Paper

Step 1: Pick a topic. Avoid general topics and find something specific.

Step 2: Gather preliminary research. Come up with a question that you want to answer about your topic. In this step, skim your sources rather than reading them in full. Depending on the assignment, you may need to create a **literature review** in which you list and explain which sources you plan to use.

Step 3: Write a thesis statement. “A good thesis statement mentions all the important parts of the discussion without disclosing too many of the details. If you’re having trouble putting it into words, try to **phrase your topic as a question and then answer it**” (Ellis).

Step 4: Find Supporting Evidence. Now is the time to go through those preliminary sources and find pieces of evidence that directly correlates to your thesis. Remember to note down page numbers so that you can cite these sources while writing!

Step 5: Group your pieces of evidence into categories. What is the best way to separate and categorize the information you’ve gathered? Order them in a way which makes sense: chronologically, spatial, order of importance, etc.

Step 6: Form an outline. Your outline will generally follow:

- Introduction/Thesis
 - Set up reader expectation for what will be talked about
 - Briefly acknowledge your main points
- Topic Sentence introducing Main Point #1
 - They Say: Evidence Supporting Point #1
 - I say: Explanation of how Evidence supports your thesis.
 - Transition sentence to Main Point #2
- Topic Sentence introducing Main Point #2
 - They Say: Evidence Supporting Point #2
 - I say: Explanation of how Evidence supports your thesis.
 - Transition sentence to Main Point #3
- Topic Sentence introducing Main Point #3
 - They Say: Evidence Supporting Point #3
 - I say: Explanation of how Evidence supports your thesis.
 - Transition sentence to Conclusion
- Conclusion
 - Restate your thesis in different words
 - Briefly summarize your main points
 - Tell your reader why these matters

Step 7: Begin writing. As you write, consider what your reader already knows and what you may need to explain to them. Remember your original thesis statement and make sure everything you write correlates in some way. If you go off topic, you may need to rewrite.

Step 8: Cite your sources/evidence correctly. Make sure you cite them according to MLA, APA, or whichever other citation style your assignment requires.

Step 9: Edit and proofread. Now you can go through and re-work your writing so that you have said everything you need to say. Is your thesis clear? Is your paper well-organized with your ideas flowing correctly? Have you cited everything correctly to avoid plagiarism? Have you checked for proper grammar and punctuation?

Ellis, Matt. "The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Research Paper." *Grammarly blog*, Jun 2022, www.grammarly.com/blog/how-to-write-a-research-paper/.

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