

Writing a Research Paper

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1. Evaluate the parameters of the assignment:

Choosing a Topic

- Do you choose the topic or is the topic chosen for you?
- Brainstorming/Clustering/Freewriting
- Decide when to limit your topic.

Research

- How long do you have to do the research?
- How much research do you need? How much is required?
- How much time do you need to get the research materials?
- Are there specific types of research required?
- Will you need to order from interlibrary loan?
- What indexes/catalogs will you use?
- Go to the Library – work with the reference librarians when appropriate.

Length/Format

- How many pages are required?
- Is there a set format?
- What bibliographic style should be used?
- Start keeping your materials in the format that will be required.

2. Set up a work plan:

- Get a calendar – mark off “due dates” for yourself
- Incorporate any “due dates” assigned by the professor
- Write a draft 3-7 days before the project is due (at least a week for longer research papers)
- Leave time for editing (meet with professor, writing center tutors)

3. Beginning the Project

- Find the research/Read it
- Note cards/Bibliography
- Avoid Plagiarism – keep accurate records

4. Develop a thesis: what problem are you addressing?

- What questions are you asking?
- Think of a problem/solution format.

5. Write a draft.

- Keep your focus on the thesis. Make sure you use the research you have gathered appropriately. Make it clear when you are summarizing, when paraphrasing, when quoting.
- Get feedback. Take draft to the professor. Take draft to the writing center.
- Rewrite/edit

6. Check bibliographic format. (Save time for this)

- Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), and Chicago Manual of Style may be consulted in the Writing Center.
- Be sure to save extra time for this step.
- Be consistent.