Super Simple Research Paper Guide

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****The research and writing process takes time. Expect to skim 5-10 resources (websites, databases, books, etc.) before selecting one you will use. Once you select a resource, plan to read all or most of it to select portions that will support your research. A research project involves doing, um, research.

- **Step 1 – Select a topic.** Make sure you are interested. You don't want to spend days (weeks?) working on a topic you find boring. Make sure you can find enough information to support your topic. If not, pick a new topic.

- **Step 2 - Think about what your topic is, who you are writing for (do they know anything about your topic?), your writing style, and purpose.** Is the purpose of your paper to persuade (argue a viewpoint or convince others your viewpoint is correct), summarize, evaluate (give criteria and determine if something meets it), analyze, or investigate (research a topic to find little-known facts without bias)?

- **Step 3 – Write a research question.** Once you have selected your topic and determined your purpose, do some preliminary research. This is when you can use Wikipedia to find out enough about your topic that you can ask a question. Your research question helps to focus your topic. It should not be too broad. Your question can ask "How?" "What?" or "Why?"

- **Step 4 – Write a thesis statement**.   A thesis statement usually appears at the end of your first paragraph and tells the reader what your paper will be about. You can adjust your thesis statement as you write your paper if your focus changes.
  Click here if you don't know what a thesis statement is.
  Or watch this video about how to write a thesis statement.

- **Step 5 – Find your first source.** Before you start looking, decide what kind of information you need - facts, opinions, news reports, research studies, history. Decide what kind of sources would most likely have what you are looking for - books, websites, databases, newspaper articles, primary sources. *Remember that websites do not contain all of the knowledge in the world.* There is a lot of information hidden in online databases, books and other sources. A Google search will not return this information.

  How do I know if I am using a Website or a Database?
  > The school library purchases databases. They can be accessed through the library web page with a password. A database is an organized collection of information. The information is usually scholarly and authoritative. The search results can be filtered to get the exact information you are looking for.

You can find a website by googling a topic or going to a specific web address. Anyone can create or access a website. They are not regulated. Many are commercial. Many are biased. All results are returned via search engine and need to be waded through to find what you are searching for.

Before you decide to use a source, you should evaluate it. Just because something is published in a book or online, doesn't mean that it is true, accurate or unbiased. Web sources in particular need to be evaluated.
Click here for the CRAP test to evaluate web sites

- **Step 6 – Cite your source.** Do it now. If you wait, you may forget which website or other source you used.

  Click here to use Noodletools to cite your sources
  Or click here for a worksheet to help you cite your sources

- **Step 7 – Write notes from your source.** You will need to do some reading to pull pertinent information from your source. Yes, you really do need to read. Not kidding. Put one note on each note card. You can use index cards for your notes or create virtual notecards in Noodletools.
  Link your note to your source. If using index cards, write "source A" on both the source and all notes from that source. If using Noodletools click the "source" dropdown and select the source are using. See illustration below.

- **Step 8 – Find another source and repeat steps 5 - 7.** Continue until you have enough information for your paper or you have at least the minimum number of sources and notecards your teacher requires.

- **Step 9 – Organize your notecards into piles grouped according to topic.**

- **Step 10 – Write an outline**. Your piles of notecards should correspond to paragraphs.
  Click here if you don't know what an outline is supposed to look like.

- **Step 11 – Start writing your paper.** Don't worry about grammar or spelling. You will go back later and tweak it. Just brainstorm and write. Be sure you include your thoughts and opinions. Any time you include something from a note card, (whether it is a quote or a paraphrase) add an in-text citation.
  Click here if you don't know what an in-text citation is.
  Click here for help quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing

- **Step 12 - Revise your paper.** Correct your grammar and spelling. Double check your in-text citations.

- **Step 13 – Format your paper.** Create a Works Cited or Bibliography page (Noodletools will do this for you) and title page.
  [Click here to see how to format your paper](#)

Resources:

Huebsch, Lauren, and Allen Brizee. "Full OWL Resources for Grades 7-12 Students and Instructors." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Purdue University, 24 June 2014. Web. 17 Nov. 2015.

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