

How to Write a Research Paper

1. Start early:

We all do it. We wait until the LAST day to start an assignment, and then something goes wrong at the LAST minute, and Woops! We get a bad grade.

Before you even START on writing a research paper, READ THE GUIDELINES.

- *What is your teacher looking for in your essay?*
- *Are there any specific things you need to include?*
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This way, you don't have to finish your essay only to find that it needs to be re-done!

2. Brainstorm research paper topics

Sometimes we're assigned essays where we know exactly what we want to write about before we start.

3. Write out your questions

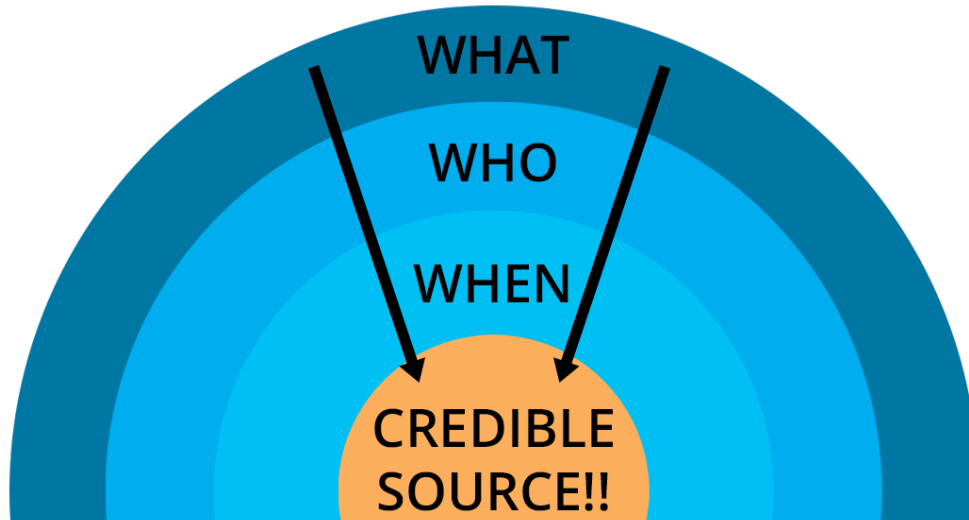
To get the BEST research, you have to ask questions. Questions on questions on questions. The idea is that you get to the root of whatever you are talking about so you can write a quality essay on it.

4. Do the research

It IS a research paper, after all. But you don't want to just type all your questions into Google and pick the first source you see. **Not every piece of information on the internet is true, or accurate.**

Here's a way you can easily check your sources for credibility: Look for the who, what, and when.

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WHO

- *Who is the author of the source?*
- *What are they known for?*
- *Do they have a background in the subject they wrote about?*
- *Does the author reference other sources?*
- *Are those sources credible too?*

WHAT

- *What does the “Main” or “Home” page of a website look like?*
- *Is it professional looking?*
- *Is there an organization sponsoring the information, and do they seem legitimate?*
- *Do they specialize in the subject?*

WHEN

- *When was the source generated — today, last week, a month, a year ago?*
- *Has there been new or additional information provided since this information was published?*

Double-check all your sources this way. Because this is a custom research paper, your writing is meaningless without other sources to back it up.

Keep track of your credible sources!

When you find useful information from a credible source, **DON'T LET IT GO**. You need to save the original place you found that information from so that you can cite it in your essay, and later on in the bibliography.

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You don't want to have to go back later and dig up the information a second time just to list the source you got it from!

To help with this, you may be familiar with the option to "Bookmark" your pages online — do this for online sources.

Ways to get information when writing a research paper

- The Internet
- Books
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Journals
- Interviews

5. Create a Thesis Statement

How to write a thesis statement is something that a lot of people overlook. That's a mistake.

The thesis statement is part of your research paper outline but deserves its own step. That's because the thesis statement is SUPER important! It is what sets the stage for the entire essay.

How do you write a thesis statement?

[Main idea/argument of essay]
[transition] [supporting point #1],
[supporting point #2], and [supporting
point #3].

Example:

The thesis statement is the most important part of an essay because it tells the reader what to expect from the essay by illustrating the main argument, providing supporting statements, and is read before the essay itself.

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6. Create an outline

Once you have constructed your thesis, the rest of the outline is pretty simple. It should mimic the structure of your thesis and feel like you are starting to write an essay!

7. Write your research paper

Here it is — the dreaded writing. *But see how far we've already come?*

We already know what we're going to write about, and where we're going to write it. That's a lot easier than taking a pen straight to your paper and hoping for some magical, monk-like inspiration to come, *are we correct?*

As you write, be sure to pin-point the places where you are inserting sources. We'll talk about in-text citations in just a moment!

Here are some basic tips for writing your essay

- Generally, don't use "I/My" unless it's a personal narrative
- Use specific examples to support your statements
- Vary your language — don't use the same adjective 5 times in a row

8. Cite your sources

This goes along with the second step — make sure to check your essay guidelines and find out **BEFOREHAND** what kind of citation style your teacher wants you to use.

As a general rule of thumb, in-text citations usually go **AFTER** the sentence drawing from the source, but **BEFORE** the period of that sentence, in parentheses. If more than one sentence is referencing the same source, try to place it at the last of those sentences.

However, no matter what you cite in your writing, **all the sources you use for the paper need to be included in your bibliography.**

This goes on a separate page, after your main essay and may be titled "Works Cited" or "Bibliography". (Make sure to check the guidelines and ask your teacher!)

9. Read your essay

Why do I need to read my essay if I wrote it?

You'd be surprised what you'll catch the second, third, and bazillionth time around reading your own writing! Not that you have to read **THIS** a bazillion times... just once or twice over will do.

We recommend that you read your essay once-through, and the second time read it aloud. Reading your essay aloud reinforces your words and makes it easier to recognize when something is phrased strangely, or if you are using a word too often.

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10. Have someone else read your essay

Lastly, it is always important that **someone else besides you** read your essay before you submit it. This is one of the secrets of writing a good essay.

Find a professional who can give you constructive feedback on how to improve your essay — this may be a tutor or a teacher. It can also be someone who specializes in the subject you are writing about.

The absolute BEST person to review your essay would be the teacher that assigned it to you.

And yes, many teachers **WILL** read the essay they assigned before it is due and give you pointers on how to make it better. They want you to succeed and they're the ones grading it — we think it's safe to say they know what they're talking about!