

A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing a Research Paper

Step One: The Preliminaries

- Choose a topic
- Begin preliminary reading
- Restrict or limit your subject
- Develop a preliminary thesis sentence

Step Two: Gathering Data

- Compile a working bibliography
- Prepare the bibliography entry on 3" x 5" cards in correct bibliographical form
- Begin extensive work in the library; be sure to check
 - general bibliographies
 - trade bibliographies
 - indexes
 - card catalogue
 - computer resources

Step Three: Taking Notes

- Develop a preliminary outline
- Evaluate source material: which is primary material and which is secondary material?
- Begin taking notes, preferably on 4" x 6" cards, which can be arranged and sorted
- Avoid plagiarism by labeling your notes as quoted, paraphrased, or summarized

Step Four: Writing the Paper

- Develop the final outline; test your outline
- Prepare to write:
 - put note cards in the same order as the outline
 - decide on the proper tense for the paper
- Write the rough draft
- Revise and rewrite
- Edit; check documentation carefully
- Type the paper according to the instructor's format
- Proofread

Remember that the tutors in the Writing Center will be happy to help you with any step in the research paper writing process.