How To Write A Research Paper
Phase One
PHASE ONE
Getting ready to write

It’s always a good idea to schedule time to work on your research paper. Trying to do everything all at once can be overwhelming.

Divide the paper into smaller steps, starting with the date your paper is due and working backward.

Make lists of tasks that you want done and by which date, and then set time aside to complete each goal by each date.
Try brainstorming with a group, or just start talking. By putting your thoughts into words and speaking out loud, you’ll start thinking more clearly.

Use free writing. Get a pencil or pen and start writing down any ideas that come to mind. The only rule to this is to write without stopping. Set a time limit and keep your pencil in motion the entire time.

Get your instructor’s approval for the topic you choose. Your professor can tell if you need to narrow the focus of your topic, or if problem’s will occur with the subject you’ve chosen.
Refine initial ideas.

The most common pitfall is selecting a topic that’s too broad. A topic statement can also function as a working title.

Write a thesis statement.
Clarify what you want to say by summarizing it in one concise sentence.
Consider your purpose:
If you want someone to feel differently, consider making a story. If you want someone to think differently, make your writing clear and logical.

Do initial research:
Gain an overview of your subject. Don’t worry about specific facts. Discover the structure of your topic---it’s major divisions and branches.

Outline.
An outline of your paper makes writing it so much easier. It keeps you from wandering off the topic and helps you keep everything arranged in a logical order.
Do in-depth research

You can use 3 x 5 cards to keep track of ideas, information, and sources. Keep these organized according to your outline. Gather more information than you can use.

Keep track of your sources. Include author(s) if listed, title, place of publication, publisher, copyright date, volume number and publication date, (if a magazine).
A lot of information can be found on the internet, but not all of it is reliable! Ask yourself:

- Who is the site’s sponsor? What is the sponsor’s mission? (Hint: Read the “About Us” page.)

- What is the domain name? Commercial (.com)? Educational, (.edu)? Nonprofit (.org)?

- Does the article seem to reflect a bias that the site’s sponsor may have?

- Can you tell who the author is? If so, does he or she seem credible?

- How current is the site? (Beware of older sites that include links that don’t work.)
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