

Palomar College Library

The Research Paper Made Easy - 10 Steps

By following the steps listed below, you will save a good deal of time and avoid a great deal of frustration:

Step 1: SELECT A SUBJECT

Find a subject area you would really like to know more about. If you genuinely like the subject of your research paper the project becomes a challenge instead of an ordeal.

Step 2: NARROW THE SUBJECT TO A MANAGEABLE SIZE

Remember, you are writing a research paper, not a book.

Step 3: STATE THE OBJECTIVE

What are you trying to say to the reader? What point are you attempting to make?

Step 4: GIVE YOUR PAPER A WORKING TITLE

A working title helps you keep to the point of your research. You can assign a final title to your paper after completion.

Step 5: PREPARE A PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography is, simply, a list of sources used in preparation of your paper. Use a separate note card for full information on each book, periodical, etc. used. Write down the "call number" of each book used in case you need to refer to it again.

Step 6: PREPARE A WORKING OUTLINE

Try to break your paper down into major areas using a simple outline format. Use your outline as an attack plan for investigating materials.

Step 7: TAKE NOTES

Use note cards (5"x7" is a good size) to record important ideas and quotations you find in your research.

Step 8: OUTLINE THE PAPER

This second outline should be more complete and closer to the format of your finished paper than the "working outline" described in Step 6.

Step 9: WRITE THE ROUGH DRAFT

- A. Write the introduction:
 - Present the idea to be expressed in a manner which captures the reader's interest.
 - State the thesis. The term "thesis" refers to the point you wish to make, or the argument you intend to present or defend.

- B. Write the body:
 - Develop your main ideas.
 - Support your ideas with details, examples.

- C. Write the conclusion:
 - Summarize the main ideas.
 - Restate your thesis.

- D. Revise the first draft:
 - Check content and organization.
 - Check transitions from one line of thought to the next. Try to make the paper "flow."
 - Double check spelling and punctuation.

Step 10: PREPARE THE FINAL DRAFT