

WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER

1. **Understand the Assignment**
 - A. Define what is required
 - B. Format required by instructor
 - C. What research is acceptable (scholarly, general public, etc)
 - D. Schedule to allow completion by deadline

2. **Choose the Topic**
 - A. Instructor may have given topics to choose from
 - B. Look at the big picture
 - C. Narrow the topic
 - i. *Asian cultures*
 - ii. *Koreans who live in Kansas City*
 - iii. *Korean culture and its individuality*
 - D. May want to brainstorm, cluster, freewrite, network

3. **Research**
 - A. Try the library
 - B. Use the Internet
 - i. Identify sources for MLA documentation as you go
 - ii. Identify sources for APA documentation as you go
 - C. Take notes

4. **Determine the Slant**
 - A. Will this be informative?
 - B. Is this a position essay?
 - C. Will the essay be a problem and solution?

5. **Develop a Thesis**
 - A. Work thesis
 - i. May not be exactly as it will end
 1. *Physical therapy is an important part of the medical field.*
 2. *Newspapers are composed of many sections.*

- ii. Begin with the thesis; start the research and possibly the first draft of the paper
- B. The final thesis might well become similar to the following as the paper continues
 - i. *In order for a physical therapist to make a difference in a patient's medical care, he/she must be trained in bones, muscles and tissues as well as any cultural diversities of the Laotian-Asian which may include religion, custom, or dress.*
 - ii. *While most metropolitan newspapers consist of many sections including world news, metropolitan, society, sports, business, and entertainment, a small-town newspaper may assemble all these sections in a more informal style.*

6. Make a Working Outline

- A. Wherever there is an A, there must be a B
- B. Wherever there is a 1, there must be a 2

7. Transform the Notes into a Rough Draft

- A. Use the outline as a guide
- B. Incorporate the research into the paper
 - i. Identify proper documentation as the paper is written
 - ii. Include proper parenthetical citations as needed
- C. Develop a clear introduction—interesting and thought provoking
 - i. Might be an attention grabber
 - ii. Probably will contain your thesis
- D. Maintain flow and unity
 - i. Might be a sequence of events
 - ii. Location of items
 - iii. Order of importance
 - iv. Topic by topic
- E. Use transitions
- F. Maintain tense (all past, present, etc)
- G. Write an effective conclusion
 - i. Summarize
 - ii. Final thought
 - iii. Opinion?

8. Revise

- A. Add further detail to areas where they are skimpy
- B. Eliminate unnecessary or ineffective sentences, phrases or paragraphs
- C. Scrutinize for anything that has move off track (tangent)

9. Proofread

- A. Read out loud EXACTLY what you have written
- B. You know what you are saying; does your read?
 - i. Is it clear?
 - ii. Is it spelled correctly?
 - iii. Is it grammatically correct?
 - iv. Are your facts accurate?
 - v. Have you given credit to someone else's words or ideas?
 - vi. Is your documentation correct?

10. Final Documentation

- A. Within the document (parenthetical)
- B. Words Cited page (MLA)
- C. References (APA)

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NOTETAKING FOR LIBRARY RESEARCH PAPERS

Make a 3x5 source card for each article, book, reference material or other source you read for your paper. Number each card in the sequence you write it and include the following information: **author's full name, complete title of the book or article, name of publication, date and page number if a magazine; for books you'll need the author's full name, the name of the publisher, city where published, copyright date, library call number and name of library.**

Sample source card:

<i>Hughes, Langston,</i>	2
<i>The Big Sea: An Autobiography</i>	
<i>New York; Knopf, 1940.</i>	
<i>H313-723</i>	<i>PVCC</i>

Use 4x6 notecards for the notes themselves. Each notecard should contain only one main idea and be written on one side of the card. That makes the cards easier to organize and will make outlining your paper easier. Place the number of the source (from your source card list) on the card. Write the main idea of the note at the top.

Use these basic note types for your paper:

Summary—Condense what you've read into main ideas; summaries are short. Use to get the main point of an article for your paper.

Sample summary card:

<i>Youth</i>	<i>L. Hughes</i>	<u><i>Summary</i></u>	3
<i>Hughes' youth was full of poverty, uncertainty, & loneliness. He rarely saw his parents and lived until he was 12 with his grandmother, Mary Langston.</i>			

Paraphrase—Rewrite an entire passage in your own words. Use this notetaking type when the information is so valuable you want to use all the writer's ideas. BUT THE NOTES MUST BE IN YOUR OWN WORDS!!!

Sample paraphrase card:

<i>Youth</i>	<i>L. Hughes</i>	<u><i>Paraphrase</i></u>	<i>3</i>
<p><i>Hughes wrote his 1st poetry as a youngster in Lawrence schools. Several classmates recalled him staying in at recess to write & they also recall the stance he took against his teacher when she put all the black kids in one row.</i></p>			
<p><i>(12)</i></p>			

Direct quotation—Use for reproducing, word for word, the source; you use quotation marks or block style for longer quotes to set them apart from the rest of the text. ONLY USE DIRECT QUOTATIONS TO EMPHASIZE IMPORTANT POINTS AND USE VERY FEW IN YOUR PAPER.

Sample quotation card:

<i>Religion</i>	<i>L. Hughes</i>	<u><i>Quote</i></u>	<i>3</i>
<p><i>"...But I was really crying because I couldn't bear to tell her that I had lied that I had deceived everybody in the church, that I hadn't seen Jesus, and that now I didn't believe there was a Jesus..."</i></p>			
<p><i>(56)</i></p>			

Comment—Use for your own observations, comments, or questions about information in the source. These are good for helping you discover a thesis for your paper.

Sample comment card:

<i>Religion</i>	<i>L. Hughes</i>	<u><i>Comment</i></u>	<i>3</i>
<p><i>Hughes never really did join a church. Perhaps his early experience with Auntie Reeds' church contributed to his distrust of organized religion.</i></p>			

By taking accurate notes in your own words, you avoid **plagiarism**, the offense of using another's words, thoughts, analyses or summaries without giving that person the credit. This is a serious offense. You can fail a paper if you plagiarize.

INTERNET RESEARCH

Your keywords listed during your prewriting/discovery step of the research process will get you started when you access the Internet or electronic databases for your topic. Remember the more focused your working is, the more specific your resources will be. Use book marks to mark your "good" sites so that you may return to them. Also, keep track of the words and phrases you use.

When you are "surfing the net" for information, you need evaluate your sources. Anyone with a computer and access to serve space can put up a web page. There are few restrictions and even fewer established guidelines as to what an author can or cannot put up on a web page. Thus, in order to do effective research on the World Wide Web, researchers need to investigate and critically approach the author's intentions, credibility, and bias, and the reliability of the information presented. Listed below are questions to assist you in your evaluation of Web sites.

Author/Credibility

1. Who is the author or producer?
2. What is the authority or expertise of the individual or group that created this site?
3. With what organization is the author of the Web site affiliated?
4. What is the bias of the author/producer/organization?
5. What are the reasons to assume that the author is an authority on the subject?
6. Is there a way to contact the author or supply feedback?

Reliability of Information

1. Who is the expected audience? Are the content and the links clearly described and suitable for the expected audience?
2. What is the primary purpose of the site (e.g., advertising, information)?
3. Is a date of publication provided? When was the Web site last revised?
4. How complete and accurate are the information and the links provided?
5. Are excerpts form texts provided or are entire texts available on the site?
6. Does the information contradict something you already know or have learned from another source?
7. Is a bibliography of print or Web resources included? (This may provide more resources for you to pursue in your research.)
8. Has the site been reviewed or ranked by an on-line reviewing agency?

Library Research

Whatever library you use, you need to find out what resources are available to you. Most of our area libraries are electronic; in other words, you are provided access to on-line catalogs, databases for journals and other periodicals, CD-ROM, and microfiche. Ask for help if you are not sure of the technology you want to use. Remember the print resources like the *Reader's Guide to Periodicals* are still located in the library and are a good resource for you. Consult the *Library of Congress Subject Heading* for keywords and related topics.

Again, you will use key words for your search. Use current and reliable resources. Evaluate your resources as above considering the source's authenticity, the reliability of the resource (compare several resources—are they giving similar facts?), the evidence supporting the resource's assertions, the tone of the source (is it logical and unbiased?), and the currency of the information in the source.

Field Research

Often labeled as primary research, field research provides first-hand accounting of information. Field research may be conducting an interview, sending out a survey, personal experiments or observations, historical documents, or other original data or information.

If you are conducting an interview, schedule an appointment, reflect on and write down your questions beforehand, take notes during the appointment or ask to tape record during the session, and if using quotes, be sure to get approval from the interviewee. Following the interview ask the interviewee if he/she would like to see the finished document and send a written thank-you note.

If you are conducting a survey, before sending it out, get some feedback from peers, instructors, or the Writing Center to make sure your questions are clear and logical.