

STEPS FOR WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER

The Writing Center handouts listed under “Resources” are available on the Writing Center website or can be picked up at the Writing Center.

Steps	Considerations	Resources
<p>1. Turn your topic into a focused question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research is a process of seeking answers, so you need to start with a question. Here’s an example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: <i>Cuts to higher education</i> • Question: <i>How have cuts to higher education affected students?</i> • Are you presenting information? Or making your own argument? • You may need to do some quick preliminary research on the web to get a basic understanding of your topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you understand the assignment • Talk to a Writing Center tutor • Use general references like Wikipedia or Encyclopedia Britannica
<p>2. Make a preliminary thesis statement and outline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will help you focus your research to begin with a temporary thesis based on your current understanding of the topic. This will give you a direction, but you do not have to stay committed to it if you find that it does not work. • If you have some potential topics, it will help you to sort your notes as you gather them. At the same time, you will be able to test the usefulness of your categories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to a Writing Center tutor • Use “Prewriting Strategies,” “Developing a Thesis Statement,” and “Structure of an Expository Essay” handouts available on the Writing Center On-line Library (OWL)
<p>3. Find sources and take detailed notes as you read.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan your reading schedule—can you really read all 100 articles and 5 books on the subject? Start with the most relevant sources first. • Consult different types of sources—journal articles, newspapers, books, and electronic sources. • Evaluate your resources to be sure that they are credible, accurate, reasonable, and well-supported. • Keep track of all the citation information for each source as you go. • Take thorough notes as you read so you don’t waste time hunting down a fact later. Also be careful when using exact words from a source in your notes—you want to be sure which words are yours and which are those of the author. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the library and academic search engines to create a list of sources on the topic. • Talk to a reference librarian (in person or in live chat on-line) at SBCC Luria Library • Use “Citation Information” handout from workshop (Writing Center OWL)



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4. Integrate research into your outline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You will probably need to revise your preliminary thesis and outline to better match your findings.• Use your outline to sort and organize your evidence before you begin writing a draft• Double-check that you've met all requirements for the assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk to a Writing Center tutor• Use "Developing a Thesis Statement," and "Structure of an Expository Essay" handouts (Writing Center OWL)
5. Draft and then revise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to read your draft as someone unfamiliar with the topic. Ask yourself: Are any questions left unanswered?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If yes, then return to your notes and/or do more research to include those answers• Insert parenthetical citations with the source page number each time you quote or paraphrase a source	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk to a Writing Center tutor• Use "Choose and Use Citations" handout (Writing Center OWL)
6. Create a works cited page.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a list of all sources used in your paper, whether you directly quote them or just paraphrase.• Format the source list according to citation style required by your instructor—usually MLA or APA. (If you aren't sure, ask your instructor.)• For on-line sources, you will need to include your "date of access" or the day you looked at the site.• In order to format correctly, you must know what kind of source you talking about: Is it a journal article, book, magazine, etc? A librarian or writing tutor can help you determine the type of source, if you are unsure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk to a reference librarian (in person or via live chat on-line) at SBCC Luria Library• Talk to a Writing Center tutor• Use "MLA Citations" or "APA Citations" handout (Writing Center OWL)• Use MLA or APA formatting guides at owl.english.purdue.edu• Try an on-line citation tool, such as Noodle or Zotero (available on the library website)
7. Proofread the final draft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read your paper aloud.• APA and MLA formatting guidelines include instructions about how to format the title and where to place page numbers—impress your teacher by producing a polished, professional looking paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk to a Writing Center tutor• Look at paper writing handbooks available in the Writing Center for individual use by students• Use "Going Over Your Paper" and other resources handouts (available on-line at Writing Center OWL)