



Research Paper Writing Tips

Research Paper Writing Tips

Question: I know what I want to write. I'm just having difficulty getting started. What can I do?

Answer: There is no magic formula to researching and writing papers. The key to keeping your research and writing pain free is to **start early** and **get organized**. The following is a simple plan for writing research papers.

Research Paper Writing Tips

Choose A Topic

- As soon as you receive your assignment start reading about the topic of most interest to you.
- This early reading will help you limit or define the parameters of your research.
- Remember the KISS principle and keep your topic simple and straightforward. If you choose an obscure or little researched topic you are bound to run into difficulties finding enough research to support a 10 page paper.

Research Paper Writing Tips

Develop A Working Thesis

- Brainstorm ideas and questions that evolve out of your initial reading.
- From your brainstorming and questions develop a draft thesis statement which could start with “I am going to prove that...” or “I am going to argue that...” or “I am going to discuss/analyze compare/...” etc.
- This working thesis statement should then determine the direction of additional research.
- ALWAYS check with your instructor to confirm your topic is appropriate and approved.

Research Paper Writing Tips

Research and Take Notes

- Make sure you note all the specifics about your research such as titles, authors, year of publication and page numbers of quotes.
 - If you have difficulty finding current research check the bibliographies or reference lists of articles or books you have already read.
- Another source of recent research is your instructor who is bound to have suggestions for you.
- Check SIAST libraries' databases. Ask for assistance from one of the librarians.

Research Paper Writing Tips

Develop an Outline

Many students think by avoiding this step they will save time. The reality is if you want to save time, **take time** to map out the direction you want your paper to take. It only takes an hour or two and your mark will reflect careful organization. You wouldn't take a trip without planning your destination and how to get there. The same principle is at work here.

Research Paper Writing Tips

Write Your First Draft

- By creating a strong outline you should be able to write your first draft in one or two sessions.
- Don't worry about editing or revising as you write. Save revisions until you've completed at least one draft.
- Make sure you include all the pertinent information when you are documenting your sources or in-text citations.
- Make sure you cite all ideas as well as quotations borrowed from other sources.
- If your working thesis or your outline isn't working change it. It's much easier to develop a new outline or thesis statement than it is to rewrite an entire paper supported by a weak thesis and flimsy evidence.

Research Paper Writing Tips

Revisions

- Don't rely on your best friend; significant other; your uncle; or your instructors to edit or proofread your work for you. Why make others responsible for your grade? You don't want all your hard work credited to other people nor do you want to rely on someone who may not know as much about your topic as you do.
- If you don't know how to punctuate or spell properly, learn to use spell check & grammar check. Make an appointment with a Learning Assistance Instructor to learn proofreading and editing strategies.
- Leave yourself enough time to let your paper "simmer" for a few days. It's much easier to pick up on typos or lack of evidence when you proofread with a fresh eye.