




Writing Workshop



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Before You Start, Practice! Practice choosing the right resource, and review how and when to name your sources. Knowing these skills will help you with your research paper.

Choosing Resources:

- If your research paper is on zebras, what resource should you check first?

Choices of Research Resources:

- Almanac
- Encyclopedia
- Book
- Magazine
- Internet

Choose a Topic

- Once you've chosen a topic, state it in the form of a question or as a problem to be solved—this is sometimes referred to as the "essential question."
- **Who is this explorer and what did he do that was important?**



Research It!

- Writing a good research paper depends on the quality of your research.
- The quality of your research depends on the quality of your resources.
- Review your essential question and topic. Knowing the reason for your research is the most important hurdle you must jump before you begin to gather resources.

Resources you might use:

- **Books:** Be sure to check for more recent publication dates to insure up-to-date information.
- **Newspapers and Magazines:** Many libraries carry past editions of newspapers on microfilm and many newspapers offer searchable databases online. Your librarian can also help you use indexes to magazine articles by topic in print and online.
- **People:** Personal interviews are often overlooked as a source of information, yet can sometimes yield some of the best material for your report.
- **The Internet:** Learn proper methods for searching and choose a search engine that is reputable. Carefully evaluate any information found online.
- **Encyclopedias:** Print versions are sometimes dated. Look for CD versions or online versions of the printed counterparts—these are constantly updated and thus contain current information.
- **Atlases, Almanacs, and Yearbooks:** These resources are great for locating statistical information and background data.



Taking Notes

- Once you've rounded up great resources, it's time to do a little reading and start taking notes.

Before you Begin Taking Notes:

- Skim through your source before you start writing. As you read, you'll see that some information may not pertain to the focus of your paper. Use bookmarks or sticky notes to mark pages you want to read more carefully and take notes on.
- Start a detailed Source Sheet that lists each resource you use as you take notes. This will come in handy when it's time to name your sources.
- Assign each source a code or abbreviation. This will keep you from having to write out the entire name on every note or note card.



Writing Notes

- Use the same type of note card or paper for each note you take.
- Always identify the source of the information and page number at the top of your note card or paper— use the code for each source if possible.
- Be sure to include the page number(s) where you located the information. This makes it easier to go back and recheck or get additional information.
- Only write on one side of the note card or paper. This will help when it comes time to organize and write your outline.
- Only write a small amount of information on each card. Keep your notes concise and to the point.
- Use your own words. It's illegal to plagiarize.
- If you must use the author's words, limit the number of direct quotations you use.
- Write neatly. You don't want to waste time later trying to decipher your own scribbles.
- Don't take notes on information that doesn't pertain to your topic. It's easy to get carried away and end up with lots of information you can't use.

Draft

- A draft allows you to begin the process of organizing your work and getting your thoughts down on paper.
- Focus on the content and allow your ideas to flow freely.
- Grammar, spelling, and punctuation will be corrected in later steps of the writing process.



Before you start writing your draft:

- Review your notes and outline.
- Organize your notes to flow with the order your outline dictates.
- Decide on a good opening for each major heading of your outline.
- Decide on an effective ending for your report. The ending should wrap all your research up into one important statement or finding.
- Highlight notes and quotes that support the ideas you choose.

As you write:

- Focus on information and allow your ideas to flow freely.
- Don't worry about grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You will correct your work later on.



A good research paper draft includes:

- all your thoughts
- as many details as possible
- complete thoughts and ideas
- enough information to turn into a final version
- information on each of the points mentioned in your outline



Revise

- Now it's time to revise your work.
- This means improving the information in your writing.
- Remember, don't make spelling, grammar, or punctuation changes. You will do that later.

Use the revision process to:

- Rearrange your writing in an order that makes sense. Use time order by putting events in the order in which they happened, or order the events from most exciting to least.
- Remove information that doesn't have anything to do with the main ideas.
- Add additional information to better explain or describe an event.
- Replace words and details with more descriptive words.
- Include lots of detail.



At this point, your research paper should include:

- a good flow of words, events, and ideas
- an order of events or stories that makes sense
- good transitions between ideas
- a lot of description
- A list of the sources you used for your research

Edit

- It's time to check the important stuff like spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and subject/verb agreement.
- While this probably isn't your favorite step in the writing process, it's an important one!



Editing Concerns:

- **Capitalization**
- **Punctuation**
- **Spelling and Sentences**





Review

- You're almost there! Use this step to make sure you've done all you can to get it right. You've drafted, revised, and edited your work. Now let's give it one more look.

Check your work.

- Read through your work from start to finish. Make any last minute changes you feel are necessary.
- Go to a quiet place and read the entire paper out loud. You'll be amazed at the number of changes you make once you hear it out loud.



Publish

- Publishing is a time to celebrate what you've done. It also lets others see your hard work. There are many ways to publish and celebrate your work.
 - Publish a your report as a book. Be sure to add photos, charts, illustrations, and other graphics to better explain the topic.
 - Create a taped version of your report.
 - Create a display highlighting the information within your report.
 - Use a multimedia software program to create an interactive version of your report complete with photos, graphics, and music to highlight your subject.