

How to conduct a research paper

A research paper is a piece of academic writing based on its author's original research on a particular topic and analysis together with interpretation of research findings.

1. Choosing a topic

Choose a research paper topic that interests and challenges you the most. Your attitude towards the topic may well determine amount of effort, enthusiasm you put into your research. Focus on a limited aspect; narrow it down from "civilization" to "British civilization" to "Magna Charta." Obtain teacher approval for your theme idea and thesis before making full-scale research. It will also help save time and effort.

It is essential for students to examine and write about a topic they like and know better. Students who are invested and involved in the subject pay attention to details in making sure that paper is as strong as it could be. Achieving this goal means addressing requirements of each paper section such as research questions, methods, analysis, and discussion, among others. Surf the internet to get inspired by various research paper topics.

2. Narrowing down the topic

After going through the necessary amount of information, data and literature available on your desired topic, it is time to narrow the research down. It's not appropriate if chosen issue is very broad as there may be several important aspects within this very theme. It won't be a good solution to cover them all in one research paper as it turns out vague or generic.

3. Collecting data

For general or background information needed for an outline creation, check out useful URLs, general information online, using search engines, or encyclopedias online such as Britannica. Use search engines or other search tools as a starting point.

As you gather your resources, note down full bibliographical information (author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, page numbers, URLs, creation or modification dates on Web pages, and your date of access) on your worksheet, printout, or enter the information on your laptop or desktop computer for later retrieval. If printing from the Internet, set up the browser to print the URL and date of access for every page. Remember that an article

without bibliographical information is useless since you cannot cite it as a source.

4. Making a thesis statement

A thesis is the main idea, a central point of your research paper. The arguments you provide in your paper should be based on this central idea that is why it is so important. Your research paper thesis statement is like a declaration of your belief. The main portion of your essay will consist of arguments for support and defend this belief.

A thesis statement should be provided early in your paper. It is impossible to create a thesis statement immediately when you have just started fulfilling your assignment. Before you write a thesis statement together with outline, you should collect, organize and analyze materials and your ideas. You cannot make a finally formulated statement before you have completed your research paper. It naturally changes while you develop your ideas.

Checking the formulated thesis

- Does my statement answer the question of my assignment?
- Is my statement precise enough? It should not be too general and vague.
- Does the body of my paper support my thesis, or are they different things? Compare them and change if necessary. Remember that changing elements of your work in the process of writing and reviewing is normal.
- Can my position be disputed or opposed? If not, maybe you have just provided a summary instead of creating an argument
- Does it pass a so-called “so what” test? Does it provide new/interesting information for your audience or does it simply state a generic fact?