**Overview of Writing a Research Paper**

1. Find a subject.
   1. Write on a topic that interests you.
   2. If the topic is too broad you will find too much information.
   3. If the topic is too narrow you will not find enough information.
2. Read a general article.
   1. This will give you a general understanding of your subject and help to narrow the topic.
   2. Try a popular magazine or an encyclopedia.
3. Formulate a thesis and basic outline.
   1. Write a sentence that describes your topic.  It must express an idea that is arguable or requires further explanation.
   2. Make an outline of the areas you want to explore for the paper.
4. Identify key concepts and terms that describe what you are looking for.
   1. Decide where to look for information: Open internet (Google), ProQuest, campus or public library, textbook, etc.
   2. Did you find what you were looking for? It is rare to find all the information you need the first time. Revise your search strategy and try again.
5. Prepare a preliminary reference list.
   1. Conduct a search of various sources to see what information is available and what research has already been done.
   2. Use a variety of dependable sources.   Not all sources are credible, relevant, or current enough.  Be sure to evaluate each one.
   3. Wikipedia is not considered a scholarly source but it can lead you to some.
   4. Start with your local campus or public library and websites pertaining to your field of study.
   5. When searching on Google, try Advanced search (under Options) and also Google Scholar and Google Books.  The librarian can assist you with these.
6. Take notes from relevant sources.
   1. Take notes in a consistent format.
   2. Be sure to write down all information needed for the Reference page. Listing this information as you go will save you time later.
   3. Copy and paste the URLs from websites you visit onto a Word document.
   4. If using quotations or paraphrases, note this so you can cite them properly.
7. Write the first draft.
   1. Get your ideas on paper; it will not be perfect the first time. Then revise your work.
   2. The more you revise, the better your grade will be.
   3. Paraphrase correctly. It is not enough to just change/rearrange a few words.
   4. Use exact quotes sparingly, use only when the author’s exact words must be used to make the point. Less than 10% of your paper should be direct quotes.
   5. Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence and supports your thesis statement. Paragraphs must have at least 3 sentences.
8. Proofread!!
   1. Spelling and grammar- remember spell-check does not catch all mistakes, you must still read over your paper.  Reading backwards can catch many spelling errors.
   2. Do all the paragraphs and sentences make sense? Are they relevant to the topic?
   3. Do the sentences flow well; do ideas need to be rearranged?
   4. Is the formatting correct? APA = 1” margins, double spaced, Times New Roman font, 12 pt. font.
   5. Write clearly and concisely – flowery language is not necessary.
   6. Be sure to have an introduction and a conclusion.
   7. Make absolutely sure all quotations and paraphrases are cited (both in-text and on the reference page).
   8. Paraphrases should not use words that are too similar to the original. When paraphrasing, read the original, put it away, and then, write in your own words.
9. Complete the Reference page.  Be sure you have an in-text citation whenever you use information from a source.
   1. Two helpful websites are:  
      [Purdue OWL](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/)  
        
      [Citation Fox - SUNY Albany](http://library.albany.edu/cfox)