

Research 101

Research Basics

Step 1. Choose your topic. When choosing a topic, choose one in which you are interested, and for which there is enough information. If your topic is too broad, you will have trouble completing your paper. “What Was The Civil War” is too broad. Thousands of books have been written on the subject and they are still writing books on the topic. “How many people were killed in the Civil War” is too narrow. It can be answered in one sentence. “Why was Gettysburg the turning point of the Civil War is about right. There is enough information available to write a good paper, but not so much that you would be overwhelmed.

Basic Rules for the Social Science Fair Paper

1. Page 1: Title Page
2. Page 2: Statement of the Problem (paragraph)
3. Pages 3, 4, 5: Body of the Paper
4. Page 6: Conclusion (about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page)
5. Page 7: Works Cited Page
6. Format rules: Typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman or Arial Font, **NO BOLD** or ALL CAPS, *no italics*, 1 inch margins top, bottom, left and right, no extra spaces between paragraphs.
7. **Plagiarism= 0.** Everything must be in YOUR OWN WORDS. Direct quotes must be in quotation marks and cited with a footnote.

Step 2. Locate information. Use information from a variety of sources. These include encyclopedias, almanacs, books, magazines, newspapers, and scholarly websites.

Step 3. Prepare Bibliography Cards. Bibliography cards are used to document the sources of information you use when writing your paper. You need to make a Bibliography Card for EVERY SOURCE you use. A good paper will have at least 8 different sources. You need to number your Bibliography Cards. We will be using MLA style for our research papers. You can look at samples of MLA citations at the following website:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

This website will show you how to cite just about any type of source you might use.

Step 4. Prepare Note Cards. Use note cards to write notes from each source you use when writing your paper. **MAKE SURE THAT YOU NUMBER YOUR NOTE CARDS THE SAME AS YOUR BIBLIOGRAPHY CARDS!!!** For example. The first source you use should obviously be numbered “1”. When you take notes from the source number your note cards 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4 etc. That way when you have several cards for one source, you know which source they came from and you can keep them in order.

Step 5. Prepare an Outline. Write an outline for your paper by organizing your notes from your note cards into topics, subtopics details and sub details. Use organization such as:

I. (Topic)

A. (Subtopic)

1. (detail)

2. (detail)

a. (sub detail)

b. (sub detail)

B. (Subtopic)

II. (Topic)

Step 6. Write a rough draft. Use your outline and note cards to write a rough draft of your paper. As you write your draft, use numbered footnotes to credit sources for major ideas or direct quotes.

Step 7. Revise your rough draft. Make any changes needed to be sure your ideas are clearly expressed. The paper needs to have an introduction and then the body of the paper should flow from beginning to end in a way that makes sense. The conclusion should come naturally from the research and there should be enough data in the paper to support the conclusion. It should also summarize the paper.

Step 8. Prepare Your Bibliography. At the end of your paper, provide a list of ALL THE SOURCES you used to gather information for the paper. Your bibliography cards will provide this information. List your sources in alphabetical order by the first word on each of your bibliography cards.

Step 9. Prepare the Title Page. The Title Page is the first page of the paper. It should include the title of your paper, your name, the date the paper is due, (Friday, December 8, 2017), and your Social Studies teacher's name.

What Is A Research Paper?

John Smith

December 8, 2017

Mr. Lipscomb

Step 10. Final Checklist. Before turning in your paper, be sure you can answer “YES” to each of the following questions:

1. Did I include a Title Page?
2. Did I include a “Statement of the Problem” page?
3. Did I provide footnotes for quotations and major sources of information in the body of my paper?
4. Is the body of my paper 3 pages in length?
5. Did I include a “Conclusion” page?
6. Did I include a “Bibliography” page?