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Writing a research paper is not something to be dreaded; rather, it is an opportunity to discover new knowledge and to persuade others to agree with your well-supported ideas. Think of it as a “blind date with knowledge.”

The steps which follow should expedite the process for your future research papers.

Set aside ample time for completing all the steps necessary:

- 1) Choose a suitable topic
- 2) Locate sources and consult with a Reference Librarian
- 3) Read and take notes
- 4) Draft a tentative thesis statement and outline
- 5) Draft the paper
- 6) Go to the Academic Support Center for editing help
- 7) Revise paper
- 8) Prepare bibliography

Choose credible sources: Using the library's databases, find scholarly or peer-edited sources; avoid Web sites with student papers or those that are anonymous.

Use both internet and print sources, thinking critically during the research, the evaluation of sources, and the integration of the sources into the paper.

Know precisely the type of source used: Is it a database, an entire Web site, a work in an anthology, a multivolume work, a pamphlet, an interview, a DVD, a journal article? Distinguish between a primary source and a secondary source.

Keep a record of sources used at the time you find the source. For internet sources, use RefWorks or a similar cite that will automatically create your bibliography page. This will save you hours of work. For print sources, collect ALL the data you will need for BOTH components of documentation: in-text citation (condensed information) and the bibliography page (complete information).

Know precisely the Documentation Style that is required for the paper. The three most commonly used for college papers are MLA, APA, and Chicago, but there are dozens of others for particular disciplines.

