

HOW TO RESEARCH FOR A WRITING ASSIGNMENT

By Miss Jacqui Engelman

Your teacher has given you a writing assignment. What do you do and where do you start? Google it? Below are several steps you should follow when planning a paper:

1. What is your topic? What are you writing about?
2. List some “key” words that may help you discover information about your topic.
3. Look up information about the subject using an encyclopedia or other reference type material.
4. Develop a thesis statement. Say what you are going to prove or disprove.
5. Figure a timeline for your paper: put number of days needed and how much time for each part of your paper.
6. Discuss the topic and thesis statement with your teacher to be sure you are on the right path.
7. Start gathering your resources. Keep a bibliography of all the information, including author, title, call number, and page or other identifying information to help you relocate the material. This can be done on index cards or on your computer.
 - a. Locate information from a variety of sources, starting with books and periodicals, especially journals. Periodicals can be found at your public library’s online site. You will need a library card to access databases found at your library.
 - b. Locate information on the internet using web sites with “.edu” to obtain the most valid material.
 - c. Summarize the information for each source.
8. Verify and evaluate all information, no matter what source. Who wrote the material? What are his/her qualifications? How old is the information and is it still accurate?
9. Analyze the information. Is it what you need for your paper?
10. Outline your paper and begin to fill in information.
11. Write your first draft of the paper.
 - a. Site information; do NOT plagiarize! Use whatever documentation system your teacher tells you. Most often you will use the “MLA Guide to Documentation.”
 - b. Proof your draft. Make corrections, additions, deletions.
 - c. Write a second draft correcting the mistakes in the first.
12. Proof your paper again. Check grammar and spelling. Does the information flow? Have you varied the types of sentences or do most of them start with “The,” or “He”?
13. If you are having a problem, TALK TO YOUR TEACHER! Your teacher can tell you if you are on track or if you have too little or too much information.
14. Write your final draft, including footnotes, bibliography, etc.

Bibliography:

Stebbins, Leslie F. Student Guide to Research in the Digital Age. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, c2006
Bell, Suzanne S. Librarian’s Guide to Online Searching. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006