

Writing Research Papers: A Step-by-Step Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide to help you organize, research, and write your research paper. For more help with your research paper, please see the handout [Research Paper Format and Documentation Tips](http://www.write.armstrong.edu/handouts/ResearchPapers.pdf).
<<http://www.write.armstrong.edu/handouts/ResearchPapers.pdf>>.



Step #1: The Preliminaries

- _____ 1. Choose a topic.
- _____ 2. Begin preliminary reading.
- _____ 3. Restrict the subject.
- _____ 4. Develop a preliminary thesis statement.

Step #2: Gathering Data

- _____ 1. Compile a working bibliography.
- _____ 2. Prepare the bibliography on cards in correct form (3" x 5" cards).
- _____ 3. Begin extensive work in the library reference section; be sure to check:
 - _____ a) library electronic resources: GALILEO (contains approximately 200 databases) or the Additional Databases section (contains 20+ more); begin on homepage <<http://www.library.armstrong.edu>>;
 - _____ b) general bibliographies;
 - _____ c) trade bibliographies;
 - _____ d) indexes (books and collections, literature in periodicals, newspaper indexes, pamphlet indexes).

Adapted from *Writing Research Papers: A Step-by-Step Procedure* by the Owl at Purdue University <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_ressteps.html>. Primary attribution goes to James D. Lester in *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*, 2nd ed. (1971; rpt. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1976).

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Step #3: Taking Notes

- _____ 1. Develop a preliminary outline.
- _____ 2. Evaluate your source material; which is primary material and which is secondary material?
- _____ 3. Begin note-taking on cards (4" x 6" cards).
- _____ 4. Avoid plagiarism.

Step #4: Writing the Paper

- _____ 1. Develop the final outline; test your outline.
- _____ 2. Prepare to write:
 - _____ a) put your note cards in the order of your outline;
 - _____ b) consider your (real and imagined) readers and how their expectations may affect your tone and style.
- _____ 3. Write the rough draft.
- _____ 4. Check your documentation carefully.
- _____ 5. Revise and rewrite.
- _____ 6. Check the format of the text, citations, notes, and bibliography: most instructors recommend MLA or APA format.
- _____ 7. Proofread.



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