Writing a Research Paper
- Alfred C. O'Connell Library -

Step One: Finding a topic

- Read your assignment directions! Be sure you understand what is required. If you don't understand all parts of the assignment, ask your professor for clarification.

- Brainstorm possible paper topics, and list the main points or arguments you would make about each topic. Need ideas? Browse through a trusted news website or magazine, wander through an online museum, take a look at the table of contents in your textbook or scan the Browse Issues list in the Gale in Context: Opposing Viewpoints database.

Step Two: Locating Information - "Doing the Research"

- Go to the Library webpage: https://www.genesee.edu/library

- Books: Search for your topic in the library's book catalog by clicking on **Find Books & Media** in the yellow bar at the top of the library webpage, then choosing **GCC Library Catalog**.

- Scholarly Journal and Magazine Articles: Search for your topic in a database by clicking on **Databases** on the library webpage. For general topics, start with Academic Search Complete or Gale General OneFile. For specialized topics, try PsycInfo & PsycArticles (Psychology), CINAHL (Nursing), JSTOR (History), ERIC (Education) or Gale in Context: Opposing Viewpoints (pro/con arguments).

- Websites: For more information about evaluating websites, click on the Help & Tutorials link on the GCC library webpage.

Step Three: Structure and Development

- Re-read your assignment: Make sure that you have gathered enough appropriate research (information) to support your ideas.

- Write a Thesis Statement and Outline: A thesis statement is the central idea of your paper. You should be able to state your thesis in one or two sentences. For more information, visit "How to Write a Thesis" on the library webpage under **Help & Tutorials**.

- Make an outline of the main points and examples of your paper. Note: Do not worry about wording or punctuation at this point in your outline.

Step Four: Writing your Paper (the First Draft)

- The first paragraph should contain your introduction and thesis statement.

- The next paragraphs should contain examples supporting your thesis statement.

- The last paragraph should contain a conclusion and reflections on the thesis statement.

- Cite (give credit to) all of the sources of information, quotes, or ideas you used in your paper – include parenthetical citations or footnotes within the paper, and a Works Cited/References/Bibliography at the end of your paper.

- Be sure to use the citation style guide your professor prefers (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). Stylesheets are available at the Information Desk in the library, or online under **Citation Guides** on the library website.

- Prevent Plagiarism When Writing: Plagiarism is when you copy someone else's work or ideas without giving credit to that person and then turn the paper in as your own work. This is stealing! If you are worried that you plagiarized or are wondering how to correctly cite sources, ask a Librarian for help, attend a Plagiarism Workshop in the Library, or see the Plagiarism Resources under the Help & Tutorials link on the library website.

Step Five: Proofreading and Revision

- Read through your whole paper and check for spelling and grammar mistakes.

- Make sure all of your main points or arguments are supported by research.

- Take your draft to a Learning Center Writing Tutor or your professor and ask them to proofread it.

Step Six: Writing your Final Draft

- Use all comments made by proofreaders and write a final draft.

- Re-read the final draft for errors before turning it in.

For Further Help

- *GCC Learning Center*

Make an appointment with a writing tutor by logging into https://tutortrac.genesee.edu or stop by the library to see a drop-in writing tutor—hours vary, see TutorTrac for details.

- *The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)at* **https://owl.purdue.edu/**

This website provides detailed information about how to write research papers including discussing research papers as a genre, choosing topics, and finding sources.

Questions? Ask a Librarian:

In Person:..Library Information Desk
Phone:...585-343-0055 Ext. 6419
Email:...Click on Email from the library's web page
Chat:...Click on Chat online from the library's web page