
How to Write a Research Paper

Outline:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) What is a research paper?
- 3) What do teachers use a research paper for?
- 4) How easy research paper writing is?
- 5) Steps of writing a research paper
- 6) Summary of steps

1. Introduction :

A research paper is not just an **assignment**, but a **commitment** to a continual **dialogue** between **teachers** and **students**.

2. What is a research paper?

A research paper is a piece of **academic** writing based on its author's **original** research (**investigation**) on a particular **topic**, and the **analysis** and **interpretation** of the research **findings**. It can be a **term paper**, a **master's thesis**, or a **doctoral dissertation**. It requires generous reading in various **sources** and gathering **information**.

3. What do teachers use a research paper for?

- Teachers as research paper **coaches** can:
 - Explore** their students' understanding, interpretation, and synthesis of their reading,
 - Discuss** their choice of sources and note taking strategies,
 - Evaluate** their work gradually, and
 - Model** ethical paraphrasing and summary skills.

4. How easy research paper writing is?

- Research paper writing is a **skill** like other study skills: acquired via practice. At the **beginning**, it may seem **daunting** to write a research paper, but with good **organisation**, **focus** of mind and **rehearsal**, you can make the process easier on yourself.

5. Steps for writing a research paper

- Writing a research paper involves all the steps for writing an essay, plus some additional ones. Research paper writing is presented in the following eight steps:

Step One: Choose a topic

- Choose an **original** topic which **interests** and **challenges** you, then try to narrow it down.
- Avoid topics that have a **limited** range of source materials.
- Ask for **advice** from your supervisor, teachers or classmates (inspiration).

Step two: Find information

- Find **books** in the library.
- Check out **the e-libraries** and **indexes to Periodicals** and **Newspapers**.
- Find encyclopedias, magazines and journals...etc.
- Use **academic databases** (ask your institution's librarian for a full list of the academic databases they subscribe to, as well as the passwords for each).
- Look **online**: opt for **websites** which end with **.Edu**, **.Gov**, or **.Org**. These websites contain credible information because they belong to schools, governments, or organizations dealing with your topic.
- Use a **minimum** of **five sources** to vary your information; **never** rely on only **one** or **two** sources.

Remember!

- As you collect data, you must record full **bibliographical information** (author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, page number, URLs, creation or modification dates on Web pages, and your date of access).
- An article without bibliographical information is useless since you cannot cite it.

Step three: Read and take notes

- **Read** through your sources, take **notes** on what you think is important, and **highlight** key facts and phrases. Write directly on **copies** you have made, or use **slips** of paper tucked into pages to mark places of importance.
- **Organize** your notes by **collecting** all of your highlighted **phrases** and **ideas** into **sections** and **categories** based on topic.
- The **more** information, the **better**. **Discard** any **unnecessary** or **irrelevant** information.

Step four: State your thesis

- Do some critical thinking and write down your *thesis statement*.
- The thesis statement is a **1-2-sentence** statement at the *beginning* (introduction) of your paper that states the **problematic** of your paper.
- An easy way to develop your **thesis** is to make it into a question that your research paper will try to answer.

Step five: Make an outline

- The purpose of the *outline* is to help you *think* through your topic carefully and *organise* it logically before you start writing.
- Include in your outline an **Introduction**, a **Body** and a **Conclusion**.
- Use the following **guide**.

a. Introduction

- State your *thesis* and the *purpose* of your research paper very clearly.
- State the chief *reason* you are writing the paper for, and how you plan to *approach* your topic.
- Is your paper a report, a book review, a comparison, an analysis of a problem, etc.?
- *Explain* briefly the major **points** you plan to cover in your paper and why **readers** should be **interested** in your topic.

b. Body:

- It can be broken down into further sections, depending on the nature of research:
 - ✓ Materials and Methods
 - ✓ Results (what are the results obtained)
 - ✓ Discussion and Conclusion, etc.

—Present your *arguments* to *support* your thesis statement and answer the questions.

c. Conclusion:

- ✓ *Restate your thesis.*
- ✓ *Summarize your arguments.*
- ✓ *Explain why you have come to this particular conclusion.*

Remember! Write your body paragraphs first, move to the conclusion, then finish up with the introduction.

The outline must also include the following elements:

- **Title (front) Page** (including the title, the author’s name, the supervisor’ name, the name of the institution, and the publication date);
- **Abstract** (brief summary of the paper – 250 words or less with **key words**);
- **References**;
- **Tables, figures, and appendices (optional).**

Sample outline

Contents	
Abstract	
1. Introduction	1
2. Research Methodology	3
2.1. Research Design and Research Approach	6
2.2. Participants and Sampling	10
2.3. Research Methods	13
2.3.1. Questionnaire	14
2.3.2. Interview	17
3. Data collection procedures	19
3.1. Piloting the Questionnaire	20
3.2. Distribution of the Questionnaire	22
4. Data Analysis Methods	23
4.1. Quantitative Data Analysis	25
4.2. Qualitative Data Analysis	27
5. Conclusion	30
References	31
Appendices	35

Step Six: Write your first draft

— Read all the relevant notes you have gathered and, with the outline before you, start writing the paper taking into consideration cohesion (syntactic) and coherence (semantic).

Step Seven: Revise your outline and draft

- Read your paper for any content errors.
- Double check the facts and figures.
- Arrange and rearrange ideas to follow your outline.
- Reorganize your outline if necessary, but always keep the purpose of your paper and your readers in mind.
- The following questions may keep you on the track.

Questions ?

- Is my thesis statement concise and clear?
- Did I follow the outline? Did I miss anything?
- Are all the sources properly cited?
- Have I proved my thesis with strong supporting arguments?

Step Eight: Type your final draft

- Proofread** your final paper carefully for spelling, punctuation, grammar, missing or duplicated words.
- Make sure that your final paper is **clean, neat** and **attractive**.
- Let at least **two** people **edit** your paper.
- Read** your paper one **more** time and **fix** all mistakes.
- Keep **consistent**.

A word on consistency!

- Adjust the *font* (12-Times New Roman), *line spacing* (doubled), and *margins* (2 cm-four sides).
- Ask your supervisor for the *requirements* set by your *institution*.
- Use the *documentation style* (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) required by your supervisor or institution to determine the ways **in-text citations**, **footnotes** or **endnotes** are used.