SEVEN STEPS TO WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER

Step 1: Finding appropriate resources (Preliminary Bibliography)

A preliminary bibliography is a list of potential sources of information. In addition to the library’s catalog, there are other sources to locate articles such as databases which cover various disciplines and subject areas. Evaluate the potential sources as you collect them, keeping in mind your broad topic, and how up-to-date and available the sources are (in class peer-evaluation will assist further assist in making your choices):

- Look up 6-8 papers that you intend to use for your research
- At home (on a separate piece of paper) label each paper as either (1) biased/nonbiased, (2) primary or secondary source, (3) very useful/useful/not so useful
- Bring in those 6-8 papers to the Thursday class
- pair up with a classmate, exchange papers and topic, and ask the classmate to label each paper (1) biased/nonbiased, (2) primary or secondary source, (3) very useful/useful/not so useful
- Talk to classmate about labels and see why you agreed/disagreed on things

Step 2: Finding thesis statement

Once you have decided, at least tentatively, what information you plan to present in your research paper, you are ready to find and write your thesis statement. Your thesis statement provides a controlling idea which will help you choose the resources you will use. Compose your thesis statement carefully, since it is the key to a good paper. Your thesis needs to be narrow and must be supported by evidence:

- After researching the broad topic, come up with a thesis statement
- Bring it with you to class and each student presents thesis statement and the class will ask you 5-6 questions about your statement
- This can be an opportunity to reshape the thesis statement or to help others

Step 3: Prepare a Working Outline

A working outline is important because it provides a starting point, and gives order to your paper. Once you are comfortable with your thesis statement, gather and evaluate your resources again, and:

- Begin by listing the topics you want to discuss in your paper
- Divide the items on the list into major topics and subtopics, outlined in the following way:
  
  I. Introduction
     a. Thesis Statement
     b. General information about the research
II. First topic, which supports thesis statement
   a. First supporting information or detail
   b. Second supporting information or detail
   c. Third supporting information or detail
   d. Etc.

III. Second topic, which supports thesis statement
    a. First supporting information or detail
    b. Second supporting information or detail
    c. Third supporting information or detail
    d. Etc.

IV. Third topic, which supports thesis statement
   a. First supporting information or detail
   b. Second supporting information or detail
   c. Third supporting information or detail
   d. Etc.

V. Conclusion
   a. Summarizes research
   b. May include personal opinion and/or observations
   c. Ends with a strong statement

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Step 4: Write the Rough Draft

After you have completed your outline, you can begin to write your rough draft. Your main concentration here should be on the content of the paper, following your outline, and expanding the ideas in it with the research you have gathered. Your rough draft should consist of three (3) parts:

1. Introduction (states the thesis, summarizes the main ideas of the paper and captures the reader’s interest)

2. Body of the paper (develops each section of the outline. Use the information gathered from your research to support the points you are making. Make sure to reference and cite each resource for your footnotes/endnotes/bibliography using the MLA 7th edition)

3. Conclusion (summarizes your findings and restates your thesis)

Step 5: First round of editing

- Bring in rough draft to class
- Pair up with classmate and exchange papers
- Using a rubric evaluate based on mechanics, organization, evidence/content, completion/referencing (Rubric 1 evaluation)
Step 6: Second round of editing

Once your first round of editing has been completed, you are now ready for revising, editing and proofreading. During the revision process:

- Make changes to the draft as necessary and suggested (these may be major or minor)
- Evaluate the word choice used throughout the paper
- Rethink and rework the paper by adding and/or removing texts, as needed

During the editing process:

- Address the general appearance of the text by correcting typographical and mechanical errors
- Make sure that the tense is consistent throughout the text
- Verify that the entire paper flows logically from the introduction through to the conclusion.

During the Proofreading process:
This is an earnest process of searching your paper for grammatical and typographical errors such as:

- Spelling
- Omitted or repeated words/terms/phrases
- Run on sentences, sentence fragments, and comma splices
- Dangling participles and misplaced modifiers
- Subject/verb agreement
- Pronoun reference agreement
- Apostrophes. Then,

- Bring in the almost finished draft to class
- Pair up with different classmate than previous time and exchange papers
- Using a rubric evaluate based on mechanics, organization, evidence/content, completion/referencing (Rubric 2 evaluation)
- COMPARE RUBRIC 1 EVAL with RUBRIC 2 EVAL. If there is an improvement from 1 to 2, this should be a good indication of some improvement (or it could just mean that evaluator 2 was being kinder, but still....)
- Repeat the revision, editing, proofreading process one last time before you submit your paper for a grade

Step 7: Submission to professor for grade

- Hand in the paper on Turnitin
- Graded by professor with extensive comments
- The option to rewrite for higher grade can be offered if necessary. again the justification for this is that the goal is to help improve their paper writing skills. if they need one more edit, then so be it.