

## **Writing a Research Paper**

### **Before Writing:**

1. Do you have a developed topic?
2. Do you have a point that you are trying to prove?
3. Is your thesis statement clear and developed enough to express your main ideas for your paper?
4. Are there sources that you can access on the internet or in the library concerning your topic?

### **Outline:**

Most times it is helpful to have a brief outline of your paper before you begin writing. The outline will allow you to think through ideas and points that you may want to add to your paper. In the outline you should include your thesis statement, your topic sentences for each new paragraph, and the reasons or explanations of what you are trying to prove for each point. From this you can start to draft your paper because your ideas will be organized and you can also edit the form of the outline before you start to write.

### **Writing the Paper:**

The most important portion of the paper is the thesis statement. This tells the reader what direction your paper will take and the important points that you are attempting to make. This is your roadmap. You will be able to format your paper after the thesis statement. Everything in your paper has to have some relationship to the thesis or else it is unnecessary information.

### **Finding and Using Sources:**

Most sources can be found in the library, but journal articles are very useful as well. The library's website has links to several search engines that provide academic journals concerning all fields. While the internet is useful you should be careful with what information you use. Make sure it is from a credible source. It is also important to find out what format the teacher requires for your paper (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.).

### **In-Text Citation and Paraphrasing:**

Once you have all your resources you will be able to integrate the quotes and important points that are made to **your own ideas**. Be wary of plagiarism. Whenever quoting directly (copying word for word) make sure you introduce your source and add parenthetical documentation.

For example:

According to Marcella, "Dogs are smarter than cats" (232).

Introducing the source is also an essential part of paraphrasing.

Marcella mentions in his article that cats have a smaller intelligence level than dogs (232).

Try to vary your use of direct quotes and paraphrasing. In addition, don't stack your quotes. Just pick a few that emphasize the point you are trying to make and then add your own explanation of why it is important to your thesis.

### **Conclusion:**

The conclusion ends your paper by summarizing what your main points are and restating your thesis statement. Do not add new information to this paragraph because it is supposed to add closure to your paper.

\*More thorough information on this topic can be found at:  
<http://webster.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml>

**The research paper leads you into the works of others and asks you to compare their thoughts with your own. Writing a research paper involves going to source material and blending what you learn from it with your own ideas. You must find texts on the subject and use them to support the topic you have been given to explore. Because it is easy to become lost in outside material, you must take particular care to narrow your topic.**

**A research paper should demonstrate what you have learned, but it should also show that you have a perspective of your own on the subject!!**