

10-STEP PLAN to Write a Research Paper

Week 1

Step 1 – Before You Begin

- Clarify the assignment’s purpose, audience, length, format, citation style, and due date.

Step 2 – Decide on Topic & Make a Plan

- Select a topic and clear it with your professor.
- Make a list of what you already know about your topic.
- The Writing Resources Center can help you brainstorm ideas and focus your topic.

Step 3 – Find Information & Take Notes

- Make a research appointment with a Swem Librarian.
- Keep track of your sources as you build a reference page.
- If you find either too many or too few sources, reevaluate your topic (Step 2).

Step 4 – Write a ‘Working’ Thesis Statement

- A thesis statement should have two parts: your topic and the claim you are making about it.
- Your thesis will evolve as you continue to learn more about your topic.
- Remember to ask yourself the “So what?” questions: Why does your thesis matter? Why should it be argued? Why should readers be interested?

Step 5 – Create a Rough Outline

- For example: Introduction with thesis statement, Body (Point 1, Point 2, Point 3), Conclusion.
- Decide which sources will support each section.
- Place a sticky note in the section with the name of the source.

Week 2

Step 6 – Draft an Introduction

- Write the draft introduction quickly – don't overthink it or make sentence-level corrections. Keep going, knowing you can revise the intro later.
- Include your thesis statement in the intro.

Step 7 – Draft the Body Paragraphs

- Spend more time on this part.
- Make sure each paragraph includes a topic sentence and supporting points.
- Use transitions to make the paragraphs flow smoothly.
- Include correct in-text citations and make sure these align with the sources on your reference page.

Step 8 – Draft your Conclusion

- Wrap up loose ends. Emphasize your key points and show why they matter.

Step 9 – Seek Feedback & Revise

- Make an appointment at the Writing Resources Center, or find another reliable reader.
- Revise to improve your focus, argument, organization, and clarity.
- Modify the introduction so that it accurately prepares readers for the paragraphs that follow.

Step 10 – Read Your Paper Aloud & Make Final Edits

- Hearing your paper will help you uncover logical fallacies, misused words, grammatical errors, and missed citations. Try it—you will be surprised!
- After you proofread, confirm that all sources cited are listed on your reference page.
- Follow the assigned formatting style.