

Writing a Research Paper

- Alfred C. O'Connell Library -

This guide is meant to help you with the process of writing a research paper in an academic setting.

Additional help with writing your paper can be obtained from Writing Tutors available in the GCC Main Campus building. Please ask a librarian for further assistance.

Step One: Beginning Your Paper

- 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 about some possible paper topics, and list the main points or arguments you would make about each topic.
- Select a topic from your list. If you can't come up with a topic, or need some ideas, see the GCC library guide, *Need a Good Paper Topic?* in print in the library or online at: https://www.genesee.edu/cms/library/assets/File/Need_a_Good_Paper_Topic.pdf

Step Two: Locating Information - "Doing the Research"

Begin at the Library's homepage: <https://www.genesee.edu/library>

Books

- The default search on the homepage is **Find It!** which will search for **both** books and journal articles. To only find books, change the search by clicking on **Classic Catalog**.

Scholarly Journal and Magazine Articles

- Using the **Find It!** search box, enter in keywords related to your topic.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed by how many results you get, look on the left side of the screen. The options listed are meant to help you navigate through your search and narrow down your results. Under **Limit To** try checking the option for **Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals**. You can also limit by publication date or subject.
- Also, browse the library's print collection of journals and magazines.
- Print out or copy the articles you find from online databases or printed journals.

Websites

- For more information about evaluating websites, see the GCC library guide, *Evaluating Internet Resources* in print in the library or online at: https://www.genesee.edu/cms/library/assets/File/Evaluating_Internet_Resources.pdf

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.
- Make an outline of the main points and examples of your paper.
- 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 at <https://guides.genesee.edu/citations>

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!
- To avoid plagiarizing, properly cite all of the resources used in your paper.
- 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 watch the Library's plagiarism videos at <https://guides.genesee.edu/copyright/plagiarism>

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 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

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)

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

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/01/>

For more specifics concerning writing help, please visit the library website:

<https://www.genesee.edu/library/instruction-and-tutorials/writing-help/>

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