

# Hartnell College Library

Reference Department 831 759.6078/755.6872

[www.hartnell.cc.ca.us/library/](http://www.hartnell.cc.ca.us/library/)

## Information Literacy I The Research Paper: *getting started*

### Basic Steps

#### 1. Choose a topic or identify your question

- Be as specific as possible.
- Have your goal in mind. Are you writing a research paper, an essay, a speech, etc.?
- How much information do you need? Do you need a specific number of sources? You may need more sources for a lengthy paper.
- What type of information do you need to accomplish your goal? Do you need a variety of sources? Do you need to use books, magazines, journals, the Internet, etc.?

#### 2. Select a topic by using information sources

- 📖 **CQ Researcher**, a weekly publication covering current and controversial topics. Available in print (REF H35 .E35), or electronically from the Hartnell College Library web site under "Article Databases."
- 📖 Current newspapers or magazines such as Time, Newsweek, etc. Browse the magazine rack at the Hartnell Library.
- 📖 Internet sites such as: CNN (<http://cnn.com/>), ABC News (<http://abcnews.go.com/>), etc.
- 📖 Encyclopedias provide overviews of a variety of topics. They are a great place to learn about an unfamiliar topic or to browse for ideas.
- 😊 Ask a librarian.

#### 3. Narrow or develop a topic

- Read about your topic. Find background information from an encyclopedia, textbook or other general source. If your topic is current or new, you may need to use a periodical article.
- Scan this information. Write down keywords, important names, dates, ideas and variant spellings.
  - Using bilingual education as an example;
    - List synonyms and related words about the subject.
      - Education, language instruction, bilingualism, limited English speaking, second language, non-English speaking, immersion programs, etc.
    - List the people involved.
      - Students, teachers, parents, school administrators, politicians, etc.
    - List the time period covering your topic.
      - From the 1960s to present
    - List any other pertinent information.
      - Politics, class size, economy, fiscal impact, student success, etc.
    - List words that describe the geographical and/or political area.
      - United States, California, Texas, etc.
  - Write down any ideas that come from combining words in the lists. For example, "How do bilingual education programs compare with language immersion programs?"

#### 4. Create a rough outline.

- Organize your ideas.
- Include an Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. Your instructor may prefer a slightly different organization.

- For help on how to outline check out the books listed below.

**5. Create a preliminary bibliography.** This is an alphabetical list of sources on your topic.

As you gather information on your topic:

- Write each source on a separate index card in the proper bibliographic format
- See our handout titled "MLA Style Sheet for Term Papers, List of Works Cited" and "How to Cite Information from Electronic Sources. There are links to bibliographic citation guides from the Library's Web page under "How to cite information."

**6. Select the appropriate sources of information.**

- Critically examine the information and sources.
- Choose the best information.
- Take notes using the sources that give your paper depth.
- Write down the page number and source for each note.

**7. Make this information part of your own understanding.**

- Arrange your notes. Use the outline from step 4 as your guide.
- Revise your outline and bibliography as you add new sources.
- Integrate material from sources into your own writing by summarizing, paraphrasing and/or quoting.
- Draw from your own experience and knowledge.

**8. Write a rough draft.** Include the information from your outline. Check for grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Does it read logically and fluidly?

**9. Type your paper.** The Library's Media Center has computers with MS Word, and is open to registered students.

- Bring your identification and a disk for saving your work.
- Include your list of works cited using the bibliographic format required by your instructor.

**MORE INFORMATION:**

**Web Sites**

Research Advice

<http://nuevaschool.org/~debbie/library/research/research>

Recommended Search Strategy

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Strategies.html>

APA

<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/>

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_apa.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html)

MLA

<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/MLA/bibliographymla.htm>

**Books at Hartnell Library**

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| D'Yanni, Robert. <u>Scribner Handbook for Writers.</u>               | PE1408 .D56 1995 |
| Gibaldi, Joseph. <u>MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.</u> | LB2369 .G53      |
| Harnack, Andrew. <u>Writing Research Papers.</u>                     | LB2369 .H32 1998 |
| Hodges, John Cunyus. <u>Harbrace College Handbook.</u>               | PE1112 .H6       |
| Winkler, Anthony C. <u>Writing the Research Paper.</u>               | LB2369 .W55 1989 |
| Yaggy, Elinor. <u>How to Write Your Term Paper.</u>                  | LB2369 .Y3       |