
How to Write a Research Paper

Read your sources and take notes

After you've gathered your sources, begin reading and taking notes.

1. Use 3X5 or 4X6 index cards, one fact or idea per card. This way related ideas from different sources can be easily grouped together or rearranged.
2. On each index card, be sure to note the source, including the volume number (if there is one) and the page number. If you wind up using that idea in your paper, you will have the information about the source ready to put in your footnote or endnote.
3. If you copy something directly from a book without putting it in your words, put quotation marks around it so that you know it is an exact quotation. This will help you avoid plagiarism.
4. Before you sit down to write your rough draft, organize your note cards by subtopic (you can write headings on the cards) and make an outline.

Check out the difference between these two note cards for a research paper on baseball.

Good Note Card

WB, 2 p. 133

Star players become national heroes

Many Americans could name every major league player, his batting average and other accomplishments.

(What batting records were set?)

- Lists Source (World Book volume 2, page 133)
- Includes heading or subtopic
- Is limited to one fact
- Has personal note/question

Bad Note Card

Baseball becomes popular

Ty Cobb (Detroit Tigers) outfielder one of the great all-time players. Another was Honus Wagner, a bowlegged shortstop..

"Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball."

- Source not indicated in top right corner
- Heading too vague
- Too many facts
- No name after quotation

Organize Your Ideas

Using the information collected on the note cards, develop an outline to organize your ideas. An outline shows your main ideas and the order in which you are going to write about them. It's the bare bones of what will later become a fleshed-out written report.

1. Write down all the main ideas.
2. List the subordinate ideas below the main ideas.
3. Avoid any repetition of ideas.

Below is a partial sample outline for a research paper entitled **The Early Days of Baseball**.

-
1. Baseball is born
 - A. Rounders
 1. Originated in England in the 1600's.
 2. differences between rounders and baseball.
 - B. The Abner Doubleday Theory
 1. Many people think Abner Doubleday invented baseball in 1839.
 - a. Doubleday's friend, Graves, claimed he was a witness.
 - b. A commission credited Doubleday with inventing the game.
 2. Historians say the theory is wrong.
 2. Baseball becomes popular
 - A. interest soars after 1900
 1. Kids favorite warm-weather sport.
 2. Crowds follow pennant races and World Series.
 3. Star players become national heroes.
 4. Known as "the national pastime."
 - a. Quote from philosopher Jacques Barzun: "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball."
 - B. The Babe Ruth era
 1. Babe Ruth joins the NY Yankees, 1920.
 - a. Plays the outfield.
 - b. Hits more and longer home runs than anyone before.
 2. Other heroes.
 - a. Lou Gehrig.
 - b. Rogers Hornsby.
 3. Radio stations begin broadcasting games.
 - a. Play-by-play accounts reach millions of people.

Name: _____

Room # _____

Introduction

Did you ever wonder

_____?

The answer is

_____.

For instance,

_____.

Furthermore,

_____.

Finally,

_____.

This report will explain

_____.

Body of Report

Main Idea : (Paragraph #1) _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Main Idea : (Paragraph #2) _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Main Idea : (Paragraph #3) _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Detail: _____

Conclusion

****Summarize your 3 topic sentences into 2 sentences.**

Ex: _____ and _____
_____ are both good for _____.
_____ also works, but in a different
way. In my opinion, I think my research information was accurate/not
accurate (choose one). I feel this way because _____
_____ and _____.
I learned _____
_____ as my report
states _____.
Finding out _____ is
important to me because _____

You can get more information on this topic at _____
_____.

Works Cited

Books with one author:

_____, _____. (____). _____.
Author, FI. MI. (Year Published). Title.
_____, _____:
Publishing City, State: Publisher.

_____, _____. (____). _____.
Author, FI. MI. (Year Published). Title.
_____, _____:
Publishing City, State: Publisher.

Books with multiple authors (only list the first three authors):

_____, _____, _____, _____, & _____, _____. (____).
Author, FI. MI., Author, FI. MI., Author, FI. MI. (Year Publish).
_____, _____:
Title. Publishing City, State: Publisher.

Encyclopedia (Book)

_____, _____. (____). _____, _____.
Author of Article, FI. MI. (Year Published). Article Title Title of Encyclopedia.
(Vol. _____, pp. _____). _____:
(Volume #, pages used). Publishing City State Publisher.

Encyclopedia (Internet)

_____, _____. (____). _____, In _____.
Author of Article, FI. MI. (Year Published). Article Title Title of Encyclopedia.
Retrieved from http://_____.

Internet Web Page

_____, _____. (____). _____, _____.
Author of Article, FI. MI. (Year Published). Article Title. Organization/Website Title.
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