



**Academic Support Center  
Writing Center**

Resources: *The LB Brief Handbook*, 5th edition;  
[http://www.sps186.org/downloads/basic/63168/Outline\\_information.pdf](http://www.sps186.org/downloads/basic/63168/Outline_information.pdf)

**Research Paper**

**Research writing:**

- Involves **deep individual researching**
- Requires studying numerous informative resources just to draw a **research paper outline**
- Meets the goal of **writing an in-depth paper.**
- Necessitates the creation of a **paper outline, which lays the groundwork for the entire paper.**

Refer to *LB Brief* handbook, **chapter 51**, which begins on **page 370**, for research strategy.

**Research Paper Steps:**

- STEP 1. CHOOSE A TOPIC
- STEP 2. FIND INFORMATION AND TAKE NOTES
- STEP 3. STATE YOUR THESIS
- STEP 4. MAKE A TENTATIVE OUTLINE
- STEP 5. ORGANIZE YOUR NOTES
- STEP 6. WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT
- STEP 7. REVISE YOUR OUTLINE AND DRAFT
- STEP 8. TYPE FINAL PAPER

**STEP 1. CHOOSE A TOPIC**

- **Choose a topic that interests and challenges you.** Your attitude towards the topic may well determine the amount of effort and enthusiasm you put into your research.

- **Focus on a limited aspect**, e.g. narrow it down from "Religion" to "World Religion" to "Buddhism."
- **Select a subject you can manage.** Avoid subjects that are too technical, learned, or specialized. Avoid topics that have only a very narrow range of source materials.

## STEP 2. FIND INFORMATION AND TAKE NOTES

- *Surf the Net:*
  - For general or background information, check out useful URLs, general information online, almanacs or encyclopedias online such as *Britannica*. Use search engines and other search tools as a starting point.
- *Check out other print materials available in the Library:*
  - Almanacs, Atlases, AV Catalogs
  - Encyclopedias and Dictionaries
  - Government Publications, Guides, Reports
  - Magazines, Newspapers
- *Check out online resources, Web based information services, or special resource materials on CDs:*
  - Online reference materials (including databases, etc.)
  - Index to Periodicals and Newspapers
  - Encyclopedias
  - Magazines and Journals
  - Newspapers
  - Public Library
- *Check out public and university libraries, businesses, and government agencies, and contact knowledgeable people in your community.*
- *Read and evaluate.* Bookmark your favorite Internet sites. Print out, photocopy, and take notes of relevant information.
- *As you gather your resources, jot down full bibliographical information* (author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, page numbers, URLs, creation or modification dates on Web pages, and your date of access). **Remember that an article without bibliographical information is useless since you cannot cite its source.**

## STEP 3. STATE YOUR THESIS

Do some critical thinking and write your thesis statement down in one sentence. Your thesis statement is like a declaration of your belief. The main portion of your essay will consist of arguments to support and defend this belief.

#### **STEP 4. MAKE A TENTATIVE OUTLINE**

The purpose of an outline is to help you think through your topic carefully and organize it logically before you start writing. A good outline is the most important step in writing a good paper. Check your outline to make sure that the points covered flow logically from one to the other. Include in your outline an **INTRODUCTION**, a **BODY**, and a **CONCLUSION**.

*INTRODUCTION* - State your thesis and the purpose of your research paper clearly. What is the chief reason you are writing the paper? State also how you plan to approach your topic. Is this a factual report, a book review, a comparison, or an analysis of a problem? Explain briefly the major points you plan to cover in your paper and why readers should be interested in your topic.

*BODY* - This is where you present your arguments to support your thesis statement. Remember the Rule of 3, i.e. find 3 supporting arguments for each position you take. Begin with a strong argument, then use a stronger one, and end with the strongest argument for your final point.

*CONCLUSION* - Restate or reword your thesis. Summarize your arguments. Explain why you have come to this particular conclusion.

#### **EXAMPLE OF AN OUTLINE:**

1. INTRODUCTION - (Brief comment leading into subject matter - Thesis statement on Shakespeare)
2. BODY - Shakespeare's Early Life, Marriage, Works, Later Years
3. Early life in Stratford
  - a. Shakespeare's family
    - i. Shakespeare's father
    - ii. Shakespeare's mother
  - b. Shakespeare's marriage
    - i. Life of Anne Hathaway
  - c. Reference in Shakespeare's Poems
4. Shakespeare's works

- a. Plays
  - i. Tragedies
    - 1. Hamlet
    - 2. Romeo and Juliet
  - ii. Comedies
    - 1. The Tempest
    - 2. Much Ado About Nothing
  - iii. Histories
    - 1. King John
    - 2. Richard III
    - 3. Henry VIII
- b. Sonnets
- c. Other poems
- 5. Shakespeare's Later Years
  - a. Last two plays
  - b. Retired to Stratford
  - c. Death
  - d. Burial—Epitaph on his tombstone
- 6. CONCLUSION
  - a. Analytical summary
    - i. Shakespeare's early life
    - ii. Shakespeare's works
    - iii. Shakespeare's later years
  - b. Thesis reworded
- 7. Concluding statement

(The above outline was found at [http://www.sps186.org/downloads/basic/63168/Outline\\_information.pdf](http://www.sps186.org/downloads/basic/63168/Outline_information.pdf))

## **STEP 5. ORGANIZE YOUR NOTES**

Organize all the information you have gathered according to your outline. Critically analyze your research data. Using the best available sources, check for accuracy and verify that the information is factual, up-to-date, and correct. Opposing views should also be noted if they help to support your thesis. This is the most important stage in writing a research paper. Here you will analyze, synthesize, sort, and digest the information you have gathered and hopefully

learn something about your topic which is the real purpose of doing a research paper in the first place.

Do not include any information that is not relevant to your topic, and do not include information that you do not understand. Make sure the information that you have noted is carefully recorded and in your own words, if possible. Plagiarism is definitely out of the question. Document all ideas borrowed or quotes used very accurately. As you organize your notes, jot down detailed bibliographical information for each cited paragraph and have it ready to transfer to your Works Cited page.

### **STEP 6. WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT**

Start with the first topic in your outline. Read all the relevant notes you have gathered that have been marked, e.g. with the capital Roman numeral I.

Summarize, paraphrase or quote directly for each idea you plan to use in your essay. Use a technique that suits you, e.g. write summaries, paraphrases or quotations on note cards, or separate sheets of lined paper.

Put all your note cards or paper in the order of your outline, e.g. IA, IB, IC.

If taking notes using the computer, create meaningful filenames that match your outline codes for easy cut and paste as you type up your final paper, e.g. cut first Introduction paragraph and paste it to IA. Before you know it, you have a well-organized term paper completed exactly as outlined.

### **STEP 7. REVISE YOUR OUTLINE AND DRAFT**

- Read your paper for any content errors.
- Double check the facts and figures.
- Arrange and rearrange ideas to follow your outline.
- Reorganize your outline if necessary, but always keep the purpose of your paper and your readers in mind.