

Getting Started with Writing a Paper

Step One: Choose Your Topic and Narrow Your Topic

Brainstorm various aspects of your subject to help narrow your topic. If you were doing a paper on crime, you want to narrow it by looking at different aspects such as location, law, type, justice, etc. (*Show how to narrow topic in gale databases/catalog/eBooks*)

Step Two: Research Information

You will want to use a variety of sources for your paper including books, magazine articles, and authoritative & reliable Internet sources.

Books: The Library has a book collection with a great reference section to find facts and information on various topics. You may be able to find some great books to help you in your research. The collection is cataloged using the Dewey Decimal Classification System. You can search the online catalog for books at your campus library or go to your campus library.

UF Library Website: University of Fairfax maintains a website that is accessible 24/7. It provides access to the databases, catalog, and eBooks.

Step Three: Gather and Organize Sources

Print out any articles or information from the web. Take notes on information you find. Take notes from the sections of the book you want to use. If you are using an online article or an eBook from the Library you have the ability to create notes right in it and it will be saved. (Be sure you sign in to save your notes).

Step four: Create a Thesis Statement

A Thesis Statement is the statement that typically appears at the end of the first paragraph that explains what your paper is about. The statement is like a summary of your paper, what you want your readers to know about your topic.

Step Five: Write an Outline

An outline allows you to organize your thoughts and ideas about how you want to organize your paper. Your outline should include an introductory paragraph, at least three body paragraphs (you should have at least three main points to your topic), and a conclusion.

Step Six: Write your paper

Begin writing your paper using your outline as a guide. You will want to incorporate your references and sources to support your thesis.

Use Information Appropriately

Remember Copyright Law and Avoid Plagiarism

What is plagiarism? Plagiarism is when you use information from a source without crediting the author especially when you take a paragraph, sentence or part of a sentence word for word from a source. When you do this you need to use quotation and credit the author with an in-text citation. Even if you paraphrase from an article, book or information from the web, you will need to credit the source with an in-text citation.

Need more help? Visit UFairfax Library's [Writing Center!](#)