

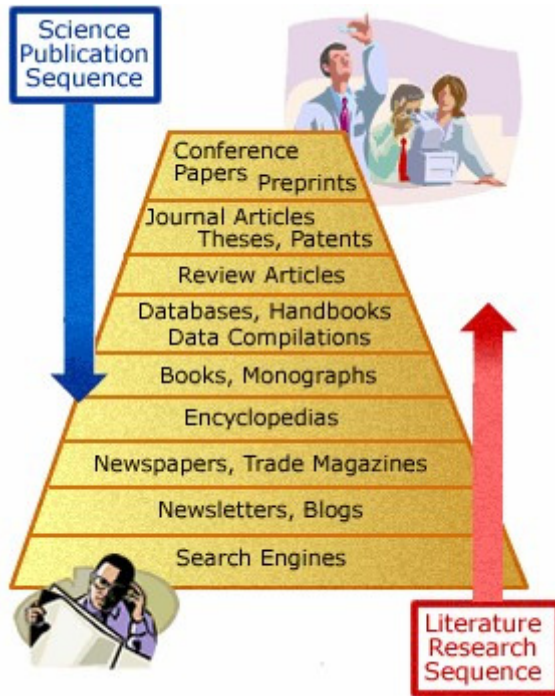
Establish Your Topic

1. Try to pick a topic that's fun and interesting. If your topic genuinely interests you, chances are you'll enjoy spending time working on it and it won't seem like a chore.
2. Finding a topic can be difficult. Give yourself plenty of time to read and think about what you'd like to do. Trying to answer questions you have about a particular subject may lead you to a good paper idea.
 - What subject(s) are you interested in?
 - What interests you most about a particular subject?
 - Is there anything you wonder about or are puzzled about with regard to that subject?
3. Once you have a topic, you will probably need to narrow it down to something more manageable. For example, say you are assigned to write a 10-page paper, and you decide to do it on Ancient Egypt. However, since Ancient Egypt is a big topic, and you only have a limited number of pages, you will have to focus on something more specific having to do with that topic.

Too general:
Ancient Egypt.

Revised:
The building of the pyramids of Ancient Egypt.

4. One method for coming up with a more specific focus is called **brainstorming** (or **freewriting**). Brainstorming is a useful way to let ideas you didn't know you had come to the surface.
 - Sit down with a pencil and paper, or at your computer, and write whatever comes into your head about your topic.
 - Keep writing for a short but specific amount of time, say 3–5 minutes. Don't stop to change what you've written or to correct spelling or grammar errors.
 - After a few minutes, read through what you've written. You will probably throw out most of it, but some of what you've written may give you an idea that can be developed.
 - Do some more brainstorming and see what else you can come up with.



Look for Sources of Information

1. Take a trip to the library. Use the electronic catalog or browse the shelves to look for books on your topic. If you find a book that is useful, check the bibliography (list of sources) in the back of that book for other books or articles on that topic. Also check indexes of periodicals and newspapers. Check with a librarian if you need help finding sources.
2. Try to use as many different types of sources as you can, including books, magazine articles, and internet articles. Don't rely on just one source for all your information.
3. Keep a list of all the sources that you use. Include the title of the source, the author, publisher, and place and date of publication. This is your preliminary, or draft, bibliography.



Read Your Sources and Take Notes

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

1. Use 3 x 5 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 own words, put quotation marks around it so that you know it is an exact quotation. This will help you to 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 differences 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

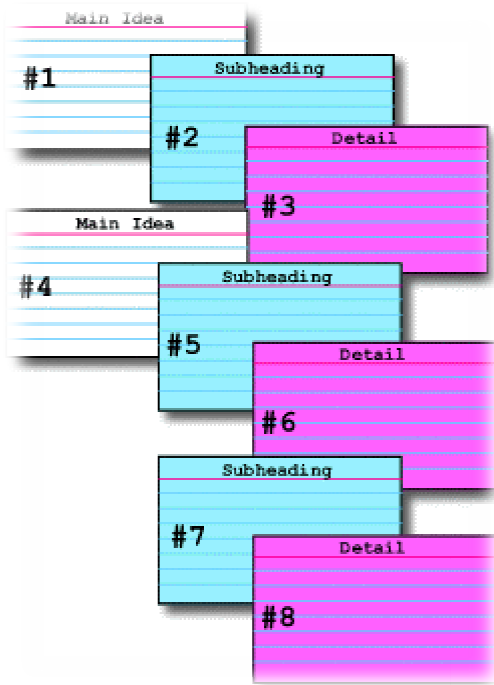
Bad note card:

Baseball becomes popular

Ty Cobb (Detroit Tigers) outfielder one of the great all-time players. Another star 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**.

- I. Baseball is born
 - A. Rounders
 1. Originated in England in the 1600s.
 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 theory is bogus.
- II. 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 NY Yankees, 1920
 - a. Plays 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.



Write a First Draft

1. Every essay or paper is made up of three parts:
 - introduction
 - body
 - conclusion

2. The introduction is the first paragraph of the paper. It often begins with a general statement about the topic and ends with a more specific statement of the main idea of your paper. The purpose of the introduction is to:
 - let the reader know what the topic is
 - inform the reader about your point of view
 - arouse the reader's curiosity so that he or she will want to read about your topic

3. The body of the paper follows the introduction. It consists of a number of paragraphs in which you develop your ideas in detail.
 - Limit each paragraph to one main idea. (Don't try to talk about more than one idea per paragraph.)
 - Prove your points continually by using specific examples and quotations from your note cards.
 - Use transition words to ensure a smooth flow of ideas from paragraph to paragraph.

4. The conclusion is the last paragraph of the paper. Its purpose is to
 - summarize your points, leaving out specific examples
 - restate the main idea of the paper



Use Footnotes or Endnotes to Document Sources

1. As you write your first draft, including the introduction, body, and conclusion, add the information or quotations on your note cards to support your ideas.

2. Use **footnotes** or **endnotes** to identify the sources of this information. If you are using

footnotes, the note will appear on the same page as the information you are documenting, at the bottom (or "foot") of the page. If you are using endnotes, the note will appear together with all other notes on a separate page at the end of your report, just before the bibliography.

3. There are different formats for footnotes (and endnotes), so be sure to use the one your teacher prefers.
4. Note that footnotes can be shortened if the source has already been given in full in a previous footnote. (see below)

Sample Footnotes/Endnotes

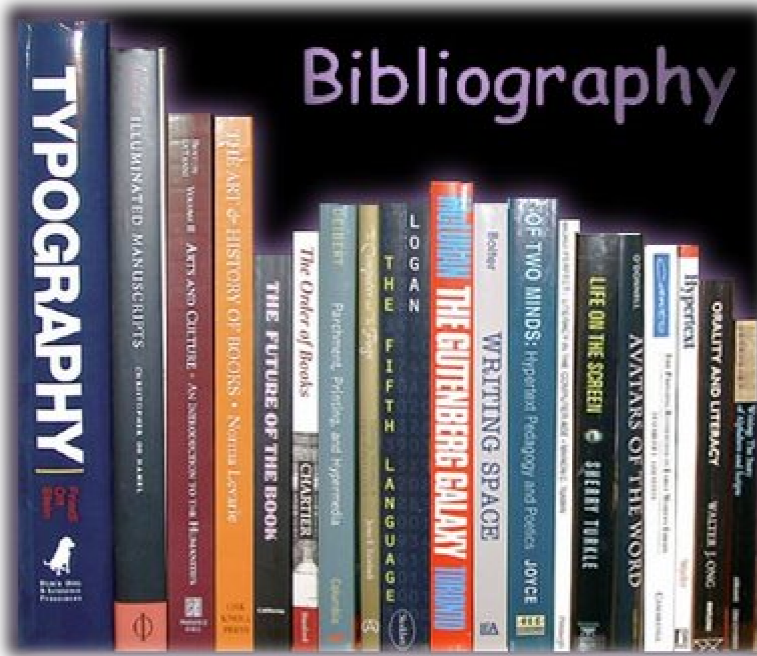
Originally Mount Everest was called Peak XV.¹ As it turned out, Peak XV already had two other names. One name came from the north side of the mountain, from the Tibetans, who had named it Joloungma, or "Goddess, Mother of the World."² The other name came from the south side of the mountain, from the Nepalese, who referred to it as Sagarmatha or "Goddess of the Sky."³ Later the mountain was renamed in honor of Sir George Everest. Although today it is rarely called Sagarmatha or Joloungma, it is clear from their names for the mountain that the Tibetan and Nepalese people worshiped this special place on earth.

(bottom of the same page for footnotes, separate page for endnotes)

¹ Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air* (New York: Villard Books, 1997), p. 10.

² Roberta Reynolds, *The Vanishing Cultures of the Himalayas* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1991), p. 23.

³ Reynolds, *Vanishing Cultures*, p. 24.



Write a Bibliography

A bibliography is a list of the sources you used to get information for your report. It is included at the end of your report, on the last page (or last few pages).

You will find it easier to prepare your final bibliography if you keep track of each book, encyclopedia, or article you use as you are reading and taking notes. Start a preliminary, or draft, bibliography by listing on a separate sheet of paper all your sources. Note down the full title, author, place of publication, publisher, and date of publication for each source.

Also, every time a fact gets recorded on a note card, its source should be noted in the top right corner. (Notice that in the sample note card, *The World Book*, Volume 2, page 21, has been shortened to: WB, 2, p.133.) When you are finished writing your paper, you can use the information on your note cards to double-check your bibliography.

When assembling a final bibliography, list your sources (texts, articles, interviews, and so on) in alphabetical order by authors' last names. Sources that don't have authors (encyclopedias, movies) should be alphabetized by title. There are different formats for bibliographies, so be sure to use the one your teacher prefers.

Different subjects require the use of different formats. Please see the list below for the proper format.

You may use: <http://citationmachine.net/> for proper formatting made easy.

Microsoft 2007 has a bibliography and source engine. Click References on the menu for access.

For Social Studies: Use Chicago Manual Style or Turabian Formats

For ELA: Use MLA Format

For Science: Use APA Format

Revise the First Draft



1. Try to set aside your draft for a day or two before revising. This makes it easier to view your work objectively and see any gaps or problems.
2. Revising involves rethinking your ideas, refining your arguments, reorganizing paragraphs, and rewording sentences. You may need to develop your ideas in more detail, give more evidence to support your claims, or delete material that is unnecessary.
3. Read your paper out loud. This sometimes makes it easier to identify writing that is awkward or unclear.
4. Have somebody else read the paper and tell you if there's anything that's unclear or confusing.



Proofread the Final Draft

1. Look for careless errors such as misspelled words and incorrect punctuation and capitalization.
2. Errors are harder to spot on a computer screen than on paper. If you type your paper on a computer, print out a copy to proofread.

Remember, spell checkers and grammar checkers don't always catch errors, so it is best not to rely on them too much.