

# San Diego Miramar College Library / LRC

## Writing a Term Paper

### **I. CHOOSE THE TOPIC**

- A. Pick a topic that interests both you and your readers.
  - 1. Avoid topics that are too obscure, technical, recent or general.
  - 2. Pick a topic that will add to your own knowledge.
- B. Narrow the topic to a manageable size  
(Not "Drugs" but "How can we win the drug war?")

### **II. DECIDE ON THE PURPOSE OF YOUR PAPER**

- A. The purpose is the central theme or intent of your research.
- B. Try to persuade the reader instead of merely reciting facts.  
Arguments are more interesting to read than statistics.

### **III. DO THE RESEARCH. TAKE ACCURATE NOTES AND CITE SOURCES FOR THE PURPOSE OF DOCUMENTATION**

- A. Use a variety of sources to find information. Books, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets are available for your use in the library.
- B. Be meticulous about your note cards. You may decide to use quotes from them, so be sure to include author, title, and page numbers on your cards.
- C. Write down complete information on each source you will use in your Bibliography.

### **IV. PREPARE A WORKING OUTLINE**

### **V. WRITE A ROUGH DRAFT BASED ON YOUR THESIS (PURPOSE), OUTLINE AND NOTES**

- A. Introduction should be brief and to the point.
  - 1. Capture the reader's interest.
  - 2. Present ideas.
  - 3. State your thesis.
- B. Main body of the paper should accomplish your stated purpose.
  - 1. Develop ideas.
  - 2. Use evidence and/or quotes to support your arguments.
- C. Conclusion should reaffirm your thesis.
  - 1. Summarize the main points.
  - 2. Draw logical conclusions.

## VI. PREPARE THE FINAL PAPER

- A. Proofread carefully for correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- B. Check organization and smoothness of style.

### HELPFUL HINTS

A term paper is usually eight to 10 typewritten pages long.

Do not exceed the maximum length by more than a few hundred words.

All pages should be numbered except the title page.

Use double spacing.

Margins should be one inch wide all around – top, bottom, and both sides.

For correct bibliographical citations, see library handout, MLA Documentation Style: Bibliography.

### FOR BOOKS ON THIS SUBJECT

D  
16  
.S255 Sanderlin, David. Writing the history paper: how to select, collect, interpret, organize, and write your term paper.

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.F73  
1998 Frank, Steven. Term paper secrets: research faster, write better, and get better grades.

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2000 Harmon, Charles, ed. Using the Internet, online services, and CD-ROMs for writing research and term papers.

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