

10 Steps for Writing an Academic Paper on Text-based Research



Getting started: what would you like to research?

1

Identify an issue, problem, or topic in a particular field of study that appeals to you personally. Then try to express your interests – as an exciting question – or as a bold statement.



Find basic background information

2

Look for credible sources of information: written interviews, letters, films, books, photographs or other artefacts. Use library catalogues and online resources. Take note of any references suggesting that someone else is working on your issues. If there are many others, consider rephrasing your question or statement to narrow your focus or to take a wider view.



Define your research approach

3

Decide more specifically how you want to answer your question.

You can:

- explore the issues in depth;
- analyse, classify, and interpret the data produced by others;
- pick an option and compare it to those advanced by other people, evaluating the pros and cons;
- or merge the findings and arguments from many sources to suggest new options and ways of seeing the issue.

Whatever approach you chose, you must justify it with reasons that are convincing, rational, and understandable.



Formal literature review

4

Think of key words that define your question and look for matching indexes and abstracts using search engines such as Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar and Microsoft Academic. Look for references that can help you with your reasoning and plans for making your argument.



Assess and review sources of information

5

You will find more sources of information than you can possibly review or need, so review what you have found and keep those that

- are unbiased and accurate;
- recognise the status quo and existing evidence;
- are produced by authors and organisations with relevant expertise;
- contain an original statement (i.e. from the original source) or explain something better (i.e. from a secondary source)

Seek more sources of information if needed and assess against the above.



Confirm your approach and line of argument

6

In light of this information, ask yourself whether your question still seems valid and whether it points towards new knowledge. Check if your approach can be justified with reasons that are convincing, rational and understandable. If not, go back to Step 1 or 3.



Outline and then write your paper

7

Create an outline of the academic paper you intend to produce. You can search for models online. Then write your paper.



Organise information sources in a discipline-appropriate format

8

Look up how to cite information in the discipline related to your issue. In every discipline, researchers need to know the accepted techniques for direct and indirect quotes as well as for summaries.

Create an alphabetical list of the sources of all of the important information you used. Organise this in the References section at the end of your paper.



Give your paper to a respected friend

9

Share your paper with a trusted friend who can give honest and constructive feedback. Ask them to check your line of argument, spelling and grammar.



Hand in your paper

10

After you have revised the manuscript, considered your friend's feedback and checked your citations, bibliography and line of argument one last time, hand in your paper to your teacher, lecturer or to the editor of a scientific journal.



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SOURCES:

Cf. Seven Steps of the Research Process, Humanities. LibreText.

[https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Composition/Book%3A_Oregon_Writes_Open_Writing_Text_\(Kepka\)/03%3A_Research/3.03%3A_Seven_Steps_of_the_Research_Process](https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Composition/Book%3A_Oregon_Writes_Open_Writing_Text_(Kepka)/03%3A_Research/3.03%3A_Seven_Steps_of_the_Research_Process)

Cf. Washington University St. Louis: <https://libguides.wustl.edu/researchapproaches>

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