

Introduction:

Research is the disciplined process of investigating and seeking facts that will lead one to discover what one feels is the truth about something.

Thesis is the one's opinion or idea which the researcher tries to prove true, by finding information.

Information can be:

Primary sources: "are those created by direct observation" (rozakis, 1999). So the researcher is the one who is collecting the data.

Primary sources include:

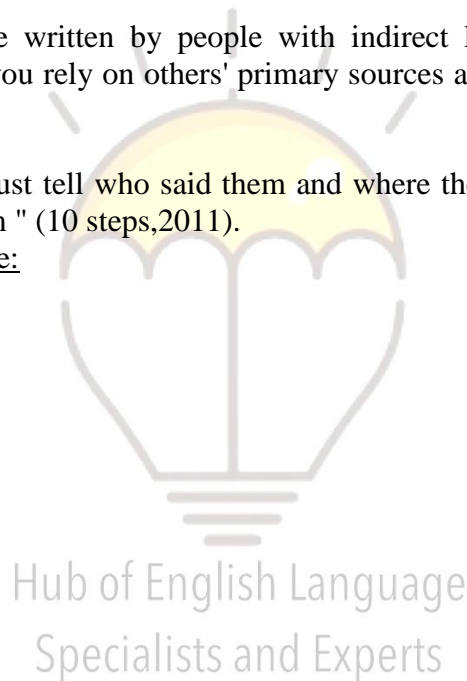
Interviews
Diaries
Surveys
observations

Secondary sources: " are written by people with indirect knowledge"(rozakis, 1999). In another word, you rely on others' primary sources and use them in your research.

However, "the student must tell who said them and where they were said so that the reader could find them " (10 steps,2011).

Secondary sources include:

Books
Textbooks
Encyclopedias



- **What is the difference between 'research paper' and 'term paper'?**

A research paper argues a thesis (the writer's opinion or idea). In another word, it is a persuasive essay which needs to be supported by examples and evidences to convince the reader.

On the other hand, the term paper is merely a collection of facts and information about certain point. The writer aims to report what others have said about this or that topic.

Research paper	Term paper
Argues a point	Presents Data
Presents a thesis	Reports what others have said
Persuasive	Descriptive
Considers why and how	Considers what

***General steps to write a research paper**

Step one: choose a topic

Step two: Narrow the topic

Step three: search for sources

Step four: Reading and taking notes

Step five: Making the outline

Step six: Making the bibliography

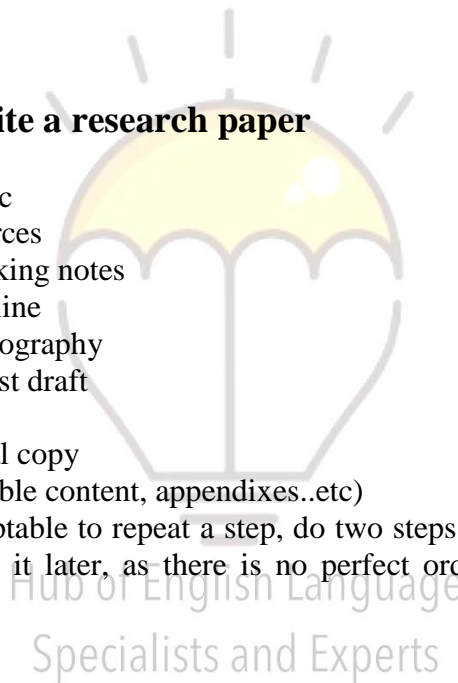
Step seven: writing the first draft

Step eight: citation

Step nine: writing the final copy

Step ten: finalizing (the table content, appendixes..etc)

However, it is quite acceptable to repeat a step, do two steps at the same time, or skip a step and return to it later, as there is no perfect order for developing a research.



Step one: the topic

Choosing the topic

- What is the difference between 'subject' and 'topic' ?
The subject is the broad and general content. While the topic of a research is the specific issue or point chosen to be discussed.

Subject examples	Topic examples
Education	Changes in the English curriculum Preparing a science laboratory
Health	The benefits of Pre-marriage checks The symptoms of swine-flu

Try to look for a topic which **interests you**. One which you will enjoy the time you spend in investigating and one for which you think you will have enough materials and sources. (10 steps)

- How to find a topic? (12 easy steps)
 - a. Brainstorming:
Think of a topic which is interesting to you and you want to know more about. It could be an information you have read or heard about or it could be one of your hobbies.
 - b. Clustering:
Clustering is a pre-writing technique which helps the writer to link and associate the ideas and the topics to discover unrealized relationships. Simply, have a piece of paper and put the general subject on the top, then write whatever comes to your mind that could possibly be associated to the chosen subject. Then, try to connect and associate the ideas which go together to come up with a suitable topic.
 - c. Freewriting:
The idea of this technique is to write freely about a subject in order to determine how much you know about it. The only thing you have to care about is to write down everything that comes to your mind. Punctuation, the order of your thoughts, completing the sentences are all not important in this step. However, this free writing is not the same as your first draft. Your first draft will be more focused and much longer.
 - d. Books and videos:
Start from the area that interests you the most and try to read or watch some materials around it. This might supply you with lots of ideas and topics to write about.
 - e. Problems around you:
Your educational problems or the social problems around you can be a good source of research topics. You only need to look around in a critical way and you will certainly find some interesting topics.

Step two: the materials

Finding whether authoritative source material is available.

After choosing your topic, you need to make sure that there are adequate information and enough materials about the subject you chose. However, there are two primary sources of information; the library (Hail university library, bookshops...etc) and the internet.

a. Searching the library

Most libraries provide two types of computer searches. The first enables you to search among all the sources and the holdings that exists in the library itself. Most of the libraries have all the resources computerized. The second type of computer search is online database access. Database (like Lexis/Nexis, proquest, infotrac and other databases) catalog a wide range of subjects containing more than one hundred terabytes of content. When searching these types of databases, the screen will let you know how many articles the keywords you have entered will generate. Obviously, the more terms you plug in, the narrower the search will be.

For example:

If you are interested in a university, do not use "university" as a Keyword. You might get thousands of results and responses. Instead, name the university, such as " Hail University". This will get you directly to the source you want.

b. Searching for materials on the internet

Internet is an expanding global information network. Therefore, it is needless to state the difficulty of going through all the websites and pages by typing the URLs (Uniform Resource Locator), because you will not know the address for all the sites that might be useful in your research project. Instead of that, you can use what we call search engines.

Search engines

A search engine will help you locating the pages contain the information you specify.

One of the most widely used search engine around the world is Google. Especially after the new features Google Scholar and Google Books to help researchers to find the books and articles they need. Other search engines that may prove useful in addition to Google include:

Altavista <http://www.altavista.com>

Bing <http://www.bing.com>

Lycos <http://www.lycos.com>

WebCrawler <http://www.webcrawler.com>

Yahoo! <http://www.yahoo.com>

Infoseek <http://www.Infoseek.com>

How to limit your search?

It is always important to be as precise and limited as possible to get the results you are looking for. The "advanced search" feature gives you a number of useful pointers in limiting your search. The best way to find the information or the source you need is to know exactly the best words for your search. If you have difficulty finding the sources, then perhaps you are searching in the wrong way.

Another thing that might help you to find what you are looking for easily is what we call "search phrases" or "truncations" as they are shown on the following chart.

the tool	Used for	example
quotes ".."	Finding exactly the words entered	" applied linguistics"
Plus +	The words that must appear	Language learning +children
Minus -	The words that must not appear	Language learning -adults
Truncation *	To include all the lexical items of a word	Bake* (will include baked, baker, bakery..etc)

Materials evaluation

Not all websites and resources you find on Google are trustworthy. Fortunately, there is criteria for the researcher to follow to differentiate between the authoritative reliable resource and the one which is not.

1. The internet addresses

Sites in the .edu and .gov domains are likely to be trustworthy since they are affiliated with educational and governmental institutions. On the other hand, sites ended with .com mean that they are commercial. So, they aim to sell something to you, or it means that they belong to an individual person.

- Com-commercial
- Edu-educational
- Gov-governmental
- Mil-military
- Net-network
- Org-organization (sometimes nonprofit)

2. The author

Knowing the author's name, his or her credentials, the educational background and the experience in the field will give you a clear idea about how reliable the website (or the article) is. If the author or the publisher is well-known in the field, then the website or the article might be credible. If there is no name or no publisher, that might be an caution for you to be suspicious about this particular website or article.

3. The article sponsor
a university press usually publishes well-researched and reliable materials. However, you might need to be careful about the articles and materials published by commercial magazines or newspaper press.
4. Reviews
What reviewers have said about a resource might consider as one of the good ways to determine whether s source is credible or not. Reviews usually found on certain websites like amazon. In addition to that, there are a number of specialized directories that are often called "virtual libraries". These directories generally evaluate the quality of the sources and often indicate the nature of the resource. The best known are:

Britannica	http://www.britannica.com
infomine	http://www.ucr.edu
Internet public library	http://www.ipl.org
Project muse	http://www.muse.jhu.edu
The virtual reference Desk	http://www.virtualref.com

1. Narrowing the topic

After choosing your topic and checking for the available resources, you might need to review your topic and check if you need to narrow it down. One of the best ways to narrow your topic is to use research questions that are used in journalism: the five Ws and the H- who, what, when, where, why, and how. The questions do not tell you a great deal by themselves, but they put you on the investigating process. They help you determine the direction to go, and they give you questions to consider as you begin your research. After answering the questions you came up with, try to analyze them and choose what emerged from the process.

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Checklist

To know if you narrowed down the topic correctly, use the following checklist:

- _____ 1. Is my topic too limited?
Problem: sometimes you might narrow the topic so much that you do not have enough left to write about.
Solution: find a topic that fills the length required by the research paper assignment.
- _____ 2. Is my topic too broad?
Problem: you may think you narrowed down the topic so sufficiently, but it may still be too vast and broad for the assignment.
Solution: check your sources. How many pages do they devote to the topic? If it takes other writers a book to answer the question you have chosen, your topic is still too big.
- _____ 3. Is my topic stale?
Problem: if everyone seems to know everything about the topic you have chosen, then who will read it? If your topic bores you, you can bet it will bore your audience.
Solution: get a new topic which is fresh and interesting.
- _____ 4. Is my topic not controversial at all?
Problem: if there is only one opinion about your topic or everyone else think the same way as you do, there is no point in arguing the issue.
Solution: you cannot argue two sides of the issue if your topic has only one side. Get a new topic that is controversial (without being offensive to anyone, of course).
- _____ 5. Is my topic too new?
Problem: if the topic is so fresh, there may not be enough information available yet to get benefit from.
Solution: find a topic that affords you sufficient information to cover the issue thoroughly.

Step three: the thesis, the outline and the bibliography

1. formulate a temporary thesis
after your quick search and readings about the topic you have chosen, you must now decide how you will work with it. It certainly not enough to collect facts and opinions as you have read them, and then retell them and merely paraphrase them. Instead, you need to concentrate on an idea that you found interesting, arguable and need some further investigation. some point that you felt the need to find the truth behind. This arguable and interesting truth that you found out is your thesis statement. It is a statement of your opinion, from what you have read, you believe can be proven. It must express an idea that is arguable and debatable or one that demands further explanation.

However, there are no hard and fast rules about how to choose a thesis. Brainstorming ideas, asking the questions who, what, where, when, why and how, and looking over the material you have searched can help you decide what you want to defend in your paper.

The thesis statement is a full sentence which expresses the main idea of the research and tells the reader about the opinion I am supporting.

For example: "English should be taught in intermediate school because it preserves students' heritage as well as their native language" is a good thesis statement because it tell the reader the idea of the topic, and informs him/her about my position in the argument.

***why is it temporary?**

The thesis in this stage is considered as an educated guess. You may need to read more and investigate the material you have gathered , and then decide whether to keep going with the chosen thesis because you have found enough evidence supporting your opinion (which is your thesis), or you might find yourself compelled to change and modify your thesis because of the lack of evidence or any other reason. So the thesis in this stage serves only as an angle of vision from which you can continue your research.

***developing good thesis statement guidelines:**

1. thesis should be one arguable point; arguable to the point that if someone else wrote about the same subject he/she will approach it differently. In another word, you are presenting your own point of view. Your search is simply gathering material others have compiled to support the point of view you have chosen for your paper.
2. a thesis should not be a question, otherwise the reader has no idea what you are trying to support and what position you are taking. Because of that it will be a statement and not a question.
3. the thesis should cover only those points you intend to discuss.
4. the thesis should have unity. This means it will have a single purpose, not a double purpose or two different ideas in your paper.

2. formulate a temporary outline

outlining is simply putting the thoughts you have about the subject in a rough outline form to have a clear idea of what you want to focus upon for your research. These thoughts will outline the path along which you and your readers will travel through. It is important that you state them as sentences because only a sentence can convey a complete idea. It might be important to inform you that a logical analysis of your thesis statement represent a good source for the points (the thoughts) in your outline.

For example:

Consider the following outline written by a student who wants to research the possibilities of having a book of his poems published:

1. getting the poems in a good working format.
2. Choosing which poems to use:
 - a. Deciding whether to group poems into subjects.
 - b. Determining whether to group the poems according to kinds of poems.
3. Talking with poets who have their poems published.
4. Reading poetry books that are similar.
5. Buying books that deal with poetry publication.
6. Learning how to write query letters and submit ideas to publishers.
7. Checking the library for ideas about getting published.
8. Determining the format of the book.
9. Considering self publication (money involved)

These outline ideas clarify to the reader the different phases and steps that the researcher will do in his/her project.

3. Formulate a working bibliography

The bibliography is a list of materials, books, websites ..etc that you are planning to include in your research project. Of course you will expect your bibliography to change considerably before it comes final because many of the titles you include might not be available, some will not be useful and you will need to add more new sources as you come across them.

For you to write the names and the information about the sources you gathered, you have to be familiar with the a special style called MLA form. Consider the following example for a book information written by MLA style :

Campbell, Joseph.	1
<u>The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor</u>	
<u>as Myth and as Religion.</u>	2
New York: Alfred van der Marck Editions,	3
1986. Print.	4

1st line: author's name in inverted order.

Notice that we start by the family name then a comma and then the first name with a period (full stop) as an end punctuation.

2nd Line: title of the book

Capitalize all the words except articles, short prepositions and short conjunctions. Underline each word separately to indicate title as it appears on the outside of the book. The line ends with a period.

3rd Line: facts of publication and medium of publication

The place of publication followed by a colon and then the name of the publisher. The line ends with a period. (Notice: if there are more than one city on the title page of the book as place of publication, choose the first city.

4th Line: date of publication.

If there are more than one date, choose the recent one. If there is no date, write in brackets thus : [n.d.] . the line ends with a period.

- How to include a website in my bibliography?
If you have a website as a source, you can include it to your bibliography as following:

Classroom Strategies. U of Texas. 14 July 1999
<<http://www.eco.utex.edu/~benedict/strategies.htm>>.

Write the title of the website underlined, then the publisher. After that comes the date of publication (if there is one), and at the end the URL between < Quotations> .

Step four: the Note cards

Information gathering is practically considered as the heart of the research. The success of the project will largely depend on the quality and the quantity of the information you gathered. So, for you to guarantee an acceptable level of information quality and quantity you need to record and take notes from the materials you read. It might be needless to state how difficult it is to remember all the materials you read, or keep Author (A)'s opinion straight from Author (B)'s opinion if you do not jot down the notes on cards. In another word, taking notes on small cards(usually 4x6 inch cards) will give you a chance to keep the information available for you when you need to organize your ideas and information later on.

- Every notecard should contain of these four items on it:
 1. The author's name (source identification)
 2. Page number in a circle.
 3. The note itself.
 4. The label or an outline item.

Lets discuss these four items in some more details:

1. The author's name :

Always make sure that you have written the author's name on the notecard, so that you can get back to the same book when you need to check the information. If you have two books by the same author, you might need to differentiate between them by writing the title of the book.
If the material you are using is a website, then write the title or the sponsor of that website.
2. Page number in a circle
Whatever you do, do not forget to write the page number to make tracking the information a little easier. It is preferred to circle the page number. If one idea is discussed on several pages in the source, write the page number at the beginning of each note.
Most internet websites would not have page numbers, so you might print out the material or count the paragraphs.
3. The note itself
 - * Try to record the smallest practical piece of information on the note card.
 - * always make sure to check each item of bibliography against the source in your hands to make sure you have the completed and correct facts concerning that particular source.
 - * try not to use the same notecard for notes from two sources.
 - * it is important to be selective about the notes you choose from the sources; one way to guarantee you have a good note is to determine whether the note is **relevant to your thesis** or not.
 - * there are three **methods of note-taking** :
 - a. taking direct quotations.
 - b. summarizing.
 - c. paraphrasing.

And we will have further details about these three methods later on.

4. The label or the outline item.

It is important to keep your outline close from you while reading, so that you can easily distribute the notes you take under the different outline items you have. For example, while reading one of your sources you found a definition of a terminology you need in your project. In order to not to lose this definition you will need to write it on a notecard, and label this notecard to indicate that this definition should go under the outline items you called "introduction". However, these labels and headings are better to be written in pencil because you may need to change them and re-categorize them in the process as we will elaborate later on.

- **Methods of note-taking :**

1. **Direct quotations:**

A direct quotation is a word for word; you copy the material as it appears in the source. In this kind of note-taking, you have to copy the note without changing the punctuations or even the wrong spelling (but u need to add [sic] to clarify that the error spelling is from the source). In addition to that, do not forget to put the double quotations " .." , to indicate that you have taken the note from the source as it is with no change.

Be aware that long quotations in your project is not advised, because readers often find long quotations hard to follow and boring to read.

- **So, what should I quote?**

@ **quote key points:** quote passages that sum up the main idea in a brief way.

@ **quote powerful writing:** if the passage is memorable or famous, it gives your search strength.

2. **Summarizing:**

A summary is taking the same passage with the same words but as a smaller version with the same essential meaning. Be sure to summarize carefully so that you don't change the meaning of the original passage in source.

3. **Paraphrasing:**

A paraphrase is a restatement of the writer's original meaning but with your own words. A paraphrase can be longer than the original, shorter or the same length as the original source. However, you must be careful not **use someone's else words as your own** or you will commit **plagiarism**. If you need to use the writer's exact words then put them between quotation marks (".. ").

- **What should I paraphrase?**

@ paraphrase materials that readers might misunderstand.

@ paraphrase information that is important in your project but too long to include in the original form.

- **How to paraphrase?**

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
2. Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card.
3. Check your new note with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.
4. Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or word you have borrowed exactly from the source.
5. Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to use the material into your research project.

Example of paraphrasing:

Original: Giraffes like leaves and hay and they can consume 75 pounds of food a day. (Roben Hood, 1330)

Paraphrase: Roben Hood stated that a giraffe can eat up to 75 pounds of leaves and hay every day.

Warning!!

Plagiarism is immoral; it is the same as stealing from another person. You must understand and remember that an idea is just as much the property of another as that person's car or clothes; if not more valuable. In recent years a Harvard professor was resigned because someone discovered he had plagiarized in a college research paper. Another case of a law student who was denied her Diploma by her college, because she forgot to put quotation marks around the material she used although she referred to the passage in her footnotes. Plagiarism is considered as a dishonesty, which you have to be careful about.

The following guidelines can help you avoid plagiarism:

1. Always put quotation marks around any direct statement from someone else's work.
2. Mention the name of the author for any paraphrase, summary or quotation because these ideas are clearly not yours.
3. Do not reference material that is common knowledge. Common knowledge such as birthplace, date of birth and any other general information that people may know without having to look up the information. For example " Skin cancer is caused by the exposure to the rays of sun" is a common knowledge which you don't have to reference.
4. Reference any summary even if it is your own words as long as the idea is not your own.
5. Tables, charts, pictures need to be referenced as they are created by others. The reference can be written immediately below them.

Step Five: re-formulating the outline and the thesis

While you are taking your notes, you will notice that you can categorize them under several headings. These headings might be similar to the items of your temporary outline or they might suggest some more topics and ideas that need to be added to your outline. However, in the light of your increased knowledge and accumulated information, it might be the right time to reevaluate and reformulate not only your outline but your thesis as well.

However, it might be important to state that in the process of sources not-taking, you will end up with a good number of cards full of notes. 1-Some of them are easily categorized under a certain heading or outline item; label these cards with the title of the heading in pencil. For example, if you find cards which are particularly good as part of an introduction or conclusion; label them with 'intro.' Or 'concl.'. 2- Other cards cannot be categorized easily; leave these notecards aside to be labeled and distributed later. 3- Some notes will obviously not belong at all; mark them with 'X' and put them aside for the time being in case you need them in this project research or in another project in the future.

It is always advisable to try to examine your notecards and your revised outline to determine if you have enough information for all the areas that are important to support your thesis. You might need to look for more information about the headings that were not covered enough.

Making a topical outline:

A topical is also called a "working outline". It helps to you and the reader to follow the topics and the subtopics of the research; it works like a map. So, you will only need to change the sentences in your outline into topics to be included in your working outline. An effective working outline will include the following parts:

- Introduction
- Thesis
- Major topics and minor topics (subtopics)
- Conclusion

However, be assured that four to five main points are more than enough in this research project as it is considered as university level research.

Do I need to re-formulate my thesis?

Now is the right time to ask yourself this question. Because after starting to write your first draft, changing things will be difficult. Think about it as house building; detecting the faults in the building during the blueprint phase is way better than detecting them in a finished building. Try to ask yourself: 'do the outline items I came up with support the thesis I claim?'. If not, you might need to work on the thesis and the outline together. You may be in need to limit the thesis if you think it is broad, or maybe you have to work on the outline to make them persuade the readers about the thesis.

Step six: Checklist before you start writing

(you might need to go through the checklist page again)

Having arrived this stage, you need to ask yourself the following questions before you start writing the first draft of the research project:

1. Does the material you gathered represent and support your thesis in an exact and clear way ?
2. Are the outline items relevant directly and thoroughly to the thesis statement?
3. Did you include sources that are not reliable and whose information is not documented?
4. Did you organize your note cards and label them according to the outline?

Also, have a look at the following writing guidelines:

- Do not begin by writing the introduction. Start now to gather the information that form the body of your research. It is better to complete the body of the research to know how to write the introduction to it.
- The complete thesis should appear early in the research so that the readers know where you are going. The same thing should be said about the paragraphs; always start the paragraph with a topic sentence (a topic sentence can be one of the points in your outline), and then try to support the topic sentence with explanations, examples, figures..etc.
- Try to leave enough space between the lines when writing the paragraphs.
- Try not to use a lot of quotations, use them only when there is no other way the material can be stated and conveyed. Do not forget to copy these quotations very carefully.
- Remember that plagiarism is using too similar words to the source keywords.
- You can insert the quotations into your own sentences, of course with the double quotations around the copied words. You can use the following words to merge the quotations with your sentences:
(the author says, .. - the author points out.. - it is easy to see that the author is referring to.. - the author agrees with ..- the author writes that..- the author discusses..- the author believes that..- the author explains his view by..- the author suggests..- the author notes that..)
- When quoting, do not forget to mention the author's name and the page number in parentheses.
- When moving from one idea to another try to indicate the relationship between them for example use the transitional phrases such as:
(as a result – consequently – on the other hand – another less important reason ..)

consider the following quotation which was taken from an author whose name is **Master Wiegand, page 30**:

Master Wiegand says, " cunning, quickness, and ruthless determination are necessary " (30).

or you can merge the quotation like thus:

the formula for success, which according to **Master Wiegand** is "cunning, quickness, and ruthless determination" (30), had to be exposed and challenged.

Notice that we mentioned the **Author's name** and **the page number**.

- Avoid using the first person pronoun; leave out I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, instead use the third person pronouns like: he, she, it, him, her, its, they, their, and related forms. So instead of saying :
" I believe that.." you better say " the researcher believes that..", or to put it in the passive voice like: " it is believed by the researcher that..".

Now you can start the fun and start writing the first draft.

Step Seven: revise the text, write the introduction and conclusion

- **Revise the text:**

The best way to revise your work is to begin by reading your paper aloud after a waiting period.

- ❖ Does it sound clear?
- ❖ Do the paragraphs seem to be well connected?
- ❖ Do you have a smooth transitions (connection) from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph?
- ❖ Did you follow the basic rules for sentence structure, style and spelling?
- ❖ Did you avoid the repetition of facts and ideas?

Wherever you find a part which needs to be corrected, you should immediately start correcting either by changing some bits or using the "copy and paste" function.

- **Hints for Writing the introduction**

Now that you have a clear idea about the text you are about to introduce, you can write an introductory part which interests the readers in what he or she was about to read. Make sure you cover the following points in the introduction:

1. Point out the value of your research, or maybe the application of it.
2. Define whatever needs to be defined of terms and jargons.
3. Explain your thesis, and why you have chosen this particular opinion.
4. Summarize how you have approached your topic.

The main point of your introduction should be around the thesis in some way.

- **Hints for writing the conclusion**

The conclusion is usually no longer than one or two paragraphs, which restates the thesis, summarizes the main points of the research.

1. Restating the thesis doesn't mean using the same words as the thesis but making direct reference to the thesis so that the paper fits smoothly.
2. Write a very short summary of your paper in the conclusion; in your introduction you told the reader about what you were writing about while in your conclusion you are telling the reader what you have written about.
3. You can insert a suitable quotation which can draw the paper to a close.
4. It is possible to emphasize some important keywords and terms used in the research.

Now read the complete work aloud again, and listen to how it sounds. Supply transitions wherever you sense a lack of continuity from one idea to the next.



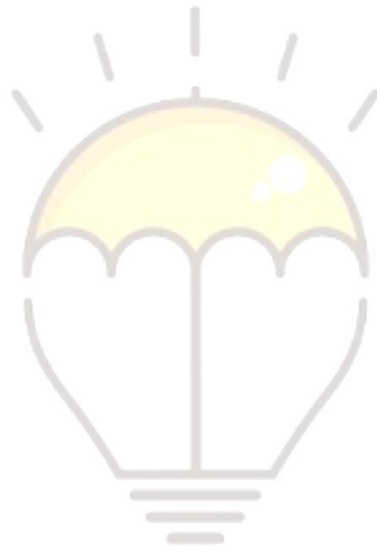
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5. Pagination

Every page after the outline should be numbered at the bottom center of the page.

6. Check your quotations

7. Proofread your paper carefully and try to correct any grammatical or spelling errors.



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