

Tips for Writing Papers

(1) **Read the assignment** sheet carefully, highlighting requirements and paraphrasing the purpose. Reread the assignment sheet at each step of the writing process.

(2) **Find a workable topic** by consulting an index to scan subheadings and article titles. Is there enough written on this topic? Do you have the background needed to write on this topic?

(3) **Become familiar with your topic** by scanning a few articles on the Web.

(4) **Formulate a possible thesis.** Think about questions that have come to your mind during the above scanning and during your previous experience with this topic. Think of problems that need solving. Decide whether you should focus on convincing us that there is a problem or, if professionals agree that the problem exists, whether you should focus on solutions. Consult your instructor for input.

(5) **Develop a very broad outline** with numbers for each section. Indicate how many pages you plan to devote to each section. Visit the **Writing Center** for help with your outline.

(6) **Research your thesis in depth.** Find articles and books. Using your outline as a guide, decide how much material you will need for each section. Evaluate which sources are the best by reading the abstract or conclusion/discussion for the article. Copy or take notes on the sources you choose to use. If you copy your sources, **highlight the articles and then put numbers in the margin to correspond to sections of your outline.**

(7) **Revise your outline** and continue revising even as you write the paper.

(8) **Write the paper section by section,** reading all appropriate sources just before writing each section. (For example, before writing section 3 of your paper, scan through the copied sources, rereading any highlighted material that you have labeled for section 3.) Do not write while looking at a source; go back to the source only for a statistic or quotation. This will help you avoid producing a "cut and paste" paper with too many quotations.

(9) **Revise** for clarity, accuracy, brevity, and relevance. Ask yourself the point of each paragraph and be able to express this in a single sentence. Check for plagiarism. Ask for feedback from the instructor or from a consultant at the **Writing Center**

(10) **Proofread** for grammar, punctuation, and missing documentation. Use spell check.

Adapted from: <http://www.uic.edu/depts/counselctr/ace/researchpaper.htm>