



# Academic Support Center

## Putting Together a Research Paper

### 1. Understand the assignment.

- What are you being asked to do?
  - Analyze
  - Compare/Contrast
  - Pros and Cons
  - Argument
  - Report
- How many sources? What kind of sources?
- Documenting sources—APA, MLA, or Chicago style?
- How many pages?

### 2. Choose an appropriate topic to the assignment. If possible, make it something you want to learn about, something you care about, or something connected to your major.

**Narrow the topic** based on page length of assignment. Do some skimming to explore possible subtopics.

### 3. Start collecting sources.

- Current
- Relevant
- Scholarly, but not over your head
- Stop when you get the number of sources you need plus a few extra.

### 4. Make a rough outline

- Based on assignment
- Chronological
- By key categories of information
- Definition, Background, Literature Review, Discussion
- Present argument, defend argument, consider/refute other side, suggest action
- Summary, Analysis, Response

### 5. Start taking notes on computer based on your rough organization, not on your individual sources.

- Be sure to note source and page number of material you are using from sources as support.
- Try to paraphrase, but if you see a great quote to use, be careful to copy it word for word and put quotation marks around the quote as you draft.

**6. Copy and paste your notes into a document in the order they will be presented** in your paper. This will become your rough draft.

- Work on paragraphs—**PIE: Point Illustrate Explain**
- Paragraph in academic papers = 1/2 to 1/3 of a page
- Introduce your sources—let your readers know where you are getting your information.

*According to Troyka (2012), the challenge of . . .*

*In a recent study, Smith and Barnes (2014) found that the ratio of . . .*

*Johnson (2013) concludes that . . .*

- Do not just drop a quote into your paragraph by itself (called an “orphan quote”).

*Troyka (2012) warns of the particular challenges of using quotations in research papers: "The greatest risk you take when you use quotations is that you will end up with choppy, incoherent sentences" (p. 184).*

*According to Troyka (2012), "The greatest risk you take when you use quotations is that you will end up with choppy, incoherent sentences" (p. 184).*

*The problem with using too many quotations in a research paper "is that you will end up with choppy, incoherent sentences" (Troyka, 2012, p. 184).*

**7. Follow citation guidelines as you document your sources.** Most computer software does not format 100% correctly; you are better off learning to do it on your own.

**8. Use the appropriate tone.**

- Do NOT use personal voice (I, me, our, we) unless your professor has specifically stated that you can.
- Do not use contractions.
- Check your tenses and be consistent. When writing about sources, use present tense.

**9. Make sure you have fulfilled ALL assignment criteria.**

**10. Use your resources!**

- Professor's office hours; Email
- Writing & Resource Center
- Regina Library

**11. Revise, proofread, and revise again.**