How to Write a Paper

Step One: Choose Your Topic and Narrow Your Topic
Brainstorm various aspects of your subject to help narrow your topic. If you were doing a paper on crime, you would want to narrow it by looking at different aspects such as location, law, type, justice etc.

Step Two: Research Information
You will want to use a variety of sources for your paper including books, magazine articles, and Internet sites.

Books
The Library has a book collection with a great reference section to find facts and information on various topics. You may be able to find some great books to help you in your research. The collection is cataloged using the Dewey Decimal Classification System. Please see the librarian for assistance in locating books. You may also want to visit your local library to locate books on your topic as well.

Virtual Library
National College maintains a Virtual Library that is accessible 24/7. You access 21 databases with more than 10,000 periodicals and ebooks.
1. After logging into the Gale Virtual Library, determine which database or databases is best for your topic.

2. Determine search strategies and enter your search terms. Be specific when it comes to broad topics such as business, healthcare, crime, etc. You may want to brainstorm related words, names, and other search terms before you begin the research process. For example, if you were doing a paper on corporate ethics, you will want to brainstorm other terms such as corporate scandals, insider trading, fraud, etc. You will need to think about specific corporations such as Enron.

Internet Searching
1. Try using search engines such as Yahoo! Or Google to locate information on the web. Both of these search engines also have a Directory feature where you can browse topics.

2. Be careful when choosing websites to support your research. You should evaluate a website before using information.

Step Three: Gather and Organize Sources
Print out any articles or information from the web. Take notes on information you find on the internet. Make copies of information found in books. Examine all your resources to determine what supports your research.
Step Four: Create a Thesis Statement
A Thesis Statement is the statement that typically appears at the end of the first paragraph that explains what your paper is about. The statement is like a summary of your paper, what you want your readers to know about your topic.

Step Five: Write an Outline
An outline allows you to organize your thoughts and ideas about how you want to organize your paper. Your outline should include an introductory paragraph, at least three body paragraphs (you should have at least three main points on your topic), and a conclusion.

Step Six: Write Your Paper
Begin writing your paper using you outline as a guide. You will want to incorporate your references and sources to support your paper.

Step Six: Use Information Appropriately

Remember Copyright Law and Avoid Plagiarism
What is plagiarism? Plagiarism is when you use information from a source without crediting the author especially when you take a paragraph, sentence or part of a sentence word for word from a source. When you do this your need to use quotations and credit the author with an in-text citation. Even if you paraphrase from an article, book or information from the web, you will need to credit the source with an in-text citation.

Cite Information Used from Sources
You will hear about different styles of writing from MLA to APA to Chicago. Each of these styles have a different ways of listing sources and providing in-text citations. Find out which style your instructor requires, then research how you need to cite works.

Here is an example of how to provide a citation for a book for each style. Below each citation is the in-text citation.

MLA

APA

Chicago

HELPFUL CITATION SITES
The Owl at Purdue: Online Writing Lab - http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

Long Island University: Citation Style for Research Papers - http://www.liunet.edu/owis/cwp/library/workshop/citation.htm

Duke University: Citing Sources - http://library.duke.edu/research/citing

See more details on citing materials under “Research and Writing” on the Library web page at National College.