

So you find yourself writing the paper at home and feeling lost? Too much information on the web site to sift through? Well, no fear - follow this step by step guide that has links to the sections in the web page and handouts that were given in class.

1. [Pick a topic](#) - should you email Mr. Alford and tell him your topic choice? That would be smart. Basically you want something that you can try to convince me of.
2. [Take notes](#) - You will be writing two types of cards - the source card and the note card. The source card is what you will need to write your MLA on. You may need the [MLA Bliss sheet](#) to help you out. You will put a letter on it. I suggest put A on your first one and B on your second one and so on. Your note cards are what you will write information about your topic on. Put only one piece of information on the card. Put the same letter that you put on your source card so that you will know where that information came from later. If you are getting information from something that has page numbers, then put the page number on that card. You will need anywhere from 50 to 70 cards to write this paper (a rule of thumb is that it take about 10 note cards a page). **Write your information in an incomplete sentence!**
3. [Slug your cards](#) - Once you finish taking notes, you will want to do the following:
 - Make sure all of your cards have a source code on them.
 - Make sure all of your cards from book sources have page numbers on them.
 - Remove all source cards.
 - Put all cards in categories of like information. For example - I'm researching the all ice cream diet. My cards have information on them that fall into these categories - 1. Healthy Ingredients in Ice Cream, 2. Fad Diets Are Bad for You, 3. History of Ice Cream, 4. Case Studies Where the Ice Cream Diet Worked, 5. Ice Cream Has the Four Main Food Groups, and 6. Miscellaneous - cards that I don't know what to do with.
 - Remove categories that do not help your argument. In the above example, I would remove 'Fad Diets', 'History', and 'Miscellaneous'.
 - For the categories you kept, slug those cards. Do this by writing a little abbreviation in the upper left corner of the card. For all my cards about the Healthy Ingredients in Ice Cream, I may write 'Healthy' in the upper corner. Now that you know to do this, in the future, slug as you write cards.
 - For each category, go through and remove duplicate cards and cards that are not very helpful.
 - For each category, put the cards in the order that you will probably use them in your paper.
 - Put each category in the order that you will use it in your paper in one stack. For example, I will put my Four Food Groups cards first, then Healthy Ingredients, and last will be Case Studies.

Now your cards are in the order you are going to write them in your paper. It will be much easier to stay focused on your point, to not use information not directly related to your argument,

and to not jump back and forth between points. This will make you look so much smarter than others around you when you are a freshman in college or community college.

4. [Write your thesis statement](#) - this sentence sums up your paper. It will be one sentence of your introduction paragraph. It will most likely, but not always, go last. [This video](#) will walk you through the process. You can scroll down a little on this link to see some examples of how to start your introduction paragraph:
<http://lordalford.com/researchpaper/research.htm#IV>

5. Set up your Google Doc:

- Make it Times New Roman font
- Make it size 12
- Make it double space. The line spacing tool looks like this:  If you do not see it in the toolbar, click the  button that shows more options.
- Do not touch the margins
- Add your name, title, class name, date, period, etc. on the first page upper right hand corner. First page only.
- This video will walk you through the process of doing the above:
<https://youtu.be/hmQverAREwc>

6. Feel free to use [this graphic organizer](#) to help you set up your paper.

7. Write your introduction - this is to explain what you are writing about AND to gain your reader's attention. It will be one paragraph and will most likely be about 4 to 5 sentences. The last sentence will be your thesis statement.

6. [Learn In-Text documentation](#) - [This link will walk you through it.](#) Here is the short version - whenever you use a note card, at the end of the sentence put the author's last name or first word of the web page title in parenthesis. If this is the first time you are doing in-text document, go ahead and do it every time you use a note card. You will not need it every time, but we can clean that up later. When the in-text comes at the end of a sentence, the period comes last.

7. Reminder - Paragraphs will be probably between 5 and 7 sentences, but should NOT be less than 3 sentences or more than 10 sentences. Do NOT put an extra line between paragraphs.

8. Start the body of your paper with your first point. This is the first category that you separated your cards into. It will be about 3-5 paragraphs. You will probably have 1 ½ to 2 ½ pages at the end of this part.

When you finish these paragraphs, do a little revising. If you cannot get someone to

proofread your paper for you, try www.paperrater.com

This is a good time to also run your paper through turnitin.com to make sure you are not accidentally plagiarising.

9. Start writing your second point. This is the second category you created when slugging your cards. This will be about 3 - 4 paragraphs. Start this with a transition sentence. A transition sentence is just a fancy way of saying write something so your reader will know you are moving on to the next point. You will probably have 3 - 3 ½ pages at the end of this part.

When you finish these paragraphs, do a little revising.

10. Start writing your third point. This is the second category you created when slugging your cards. This will be about 2 - 4 paragraphs. Start this with a transition sentence. You will probably be about 4 ½ to 5 pages at the end of this part.

When you finish these paragraphs, do a little revising. If you cannot get someone to proofread your paper, try using <https://www.123helpme.com/writing-tool/edit>

Run it through turnitin.com again to catch any accidental plagiarising.

11. Write your [conclusion](#) - This is one paragraph. It wraps up all the ideas in a neat little package. Please do NOT start your conclusion with these words: LASTLY, IN CONCLUSION, or FINALLY.

Just summarize the main points and reassert your position. It is common to end with a quotation, a prediction, a recommendation, or a reference to something mentioned in the introduction.

12. REVISE! Run your paper through these online proofreaders:

[Paper Rater](#) - use this to spell simple spelling and punctuation

[Hemingway](#) - pay attention to the red highlighted sentences - it is flagging those as hard to read

[Virtual Writing Tutor](#) - one more chance to spot simple mistakes.

13. [Clean up your in-text](#) - Use this link to go through and clean up the in-text citations you do not need.

14. [Clean up formal writing issues](#) - The link is a bit more detailed, but here is the short version:

- [Get rid of all contractions](#) - just spell them out. can't = cannot won't = will not it's = it is

- **Get rid of all first person pronouns** - I, me, mine, my, we, our, ours, us - This is usually pretty easy. If you wrote, "I believe that capital punishment is needed for justice in our country," then you could get rid of the first part and change the 'our country' to 'America'. "Capital punishment is needed for justice in America."
- **Get rid of all second person pronouns** - you, your - a little harder. Change it to third person or use the pronoun 'one'. "You will be able to lose weight better using the all ice cream method" - "People will be able to lose weight better" or "One will be able to lose weight better."

NOTE - Google Docs is a little weird. It sometimes formats the paper on screen differently than how it prints out. For this reason, it is advisable for you to:

- put your title page and your works cited page on different documents than your main paper, and
- hit print and look at the preview to make sure it comes out to a full 5 pages and nothing looks wonky.

15. Title Page - put your title on it (without underlining, italics, or quotation marks) and your name. Please make sure you spell and capitalize these correctly. Anything else you want to put on it is OK.

16. Works Cited

- In the top center of the page, write the words Works Cited
- Single space this document
- Put an extra line space between sources
- Arrange your sources in alphabetical order by the first word of the source (not by your source code). Numerals go first. Ignore the articles (the, a, an)
- Make sure that the paper is reverse indented - not centered. Many people make that mistake because they centered the words Works Cited at the top of the page. To reverse indent, highlight your MLA entries. Then click the FORMAT option at the top of your document. Choose ALIGN & INDENT. Now pick INDENT OPTIONS. For SPECIAL INDENT, change NONE to HANGING. Now your margins are set for reverse indent (also called hanging indent).

17. Turning your paper in - make sure you have your paper printed out (I can print your paper if needed) and placed in a manila envelope along with your cards (just put them all in), your rubric, and a pen of the color noted on the rubric if you want the bonus points.

Your printed out paper is due on the due date by 4:15 EVEN IF YOU ARE ABSENT.