

FONTBONNE UNIVERSITY

THE KINKEL CENTER FOR ACADEMIC RESOURCES

RESEARCHING THE PAPER

As you are working on a research paper, keep in mind that its primary function is to show your ability to read and understand scholarly research and use it to support your own ideas and opinions.

1. **Due date.** Keep in mind the due date and start working the day the paper is assigned.
2. **Length.** Papers should be within the parameters set by the instructor in the syllabus.
3. **Form.** Papers should be typed, double spaced and follow the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th edition) style. This style is commonly referred to as “APA style.”
4. **Textbook.** Read the relevant parts of the textbook on the topic you are considering before you begin your research to put the topic in the proper context.
5. **Brainstorm the topic.** Write down the topic and briefly list everything you currently know about it. Can you limit the topic to the scope of the paper due for this course?
6. **Gather data.** Use library sources and electronic resources to search for relevant material.
7. **Develop a thesis.** The thesis statement is the means by which you communicate your topic and indicate your goal. It sets forth in a sentence or two the paper’s controlling idea, answering the questions, “What point does the paper make?”, “What stand does its writer take?”, “What opinion does it offer?” A carefully stated thesis introduces and summarizes the entire paper.
8. **Continue to gather data.** Because you have focused the paper around a thesis statement, some of your sources may no longer apply to the original focus of the paper. It may be necessary to get new source material.
9. **Develop a detailed outline for the paper.** An outline promotes organization of the key concepts that develop the thesis presented. A detailed outline makes writing the paper much simpler.
10. **Blend the work of many authors into one cohesive paper.** It is important to present the research you have done in a cohesive manner that holds the interest of your audience.
11. **Cite all sources.** When you copy something word for word, or when you are merely rephrasing ideas from someone else’s text, you must cite your source, including the last name of the author and the date of publication in parentheses. If you use someone else’s words and ideas without citing them, you are committing plagiarism.

FORMATTING THE PAPER

1. **Introductions.** A paragraph or two that clearly and concisely describes (1) the topic of your paper, (2) the questions(s) you will investigate, and (3) the various points of view or differing explanations proposed in the articles on which you are basing your paper.
2. **Literature Review.** The core of the paper must be a discussion of the reading that you have done. While magazines written for a general audience sometimes pose provocative questions and contain interesting information, you should not rely on them for accuracy. Instead, you should find recent scholarly books and journals on your topic.
3. **Your opinions.** A very important part of the paper is your own opinions and ideas, based on the research you have read. Indicate which sources you agree with and which you don’t and why. What conclusions can you draw from your reading? What important questions related to your topic remain unanswered?
4. **References.** All books and journals related to your paper should be listed alphabetically in a Reference section at the end of the paper. You should follow the format of the American Psychological Association.