

CI University Library: Tips for Students- Before Writing A Paper

Plan Before You Write

Brainstorm the ideas and points that you want to make in your paper and try to come up with a tentative outline.

Decide how you want to use these sources in your paper by working out a balance between the ideas you have taken from other sources and your own, original ideas.

Writing an outline or coming up with a thesis statement will help you to only incorporate sources that support what you are trying to say.

If you plan, you will have time to ask your instructor questions about any confusion you have about plagiarism or the particular citation style expected in the course.

Take Notes

To organize your research before you start to write, take thorough notes from your outside sources. Write notes about the source, including how you are going to use that source and the bibliographic information.

As you read through your sources, refer to your outline or thesis to pick out research that relates to or supports your ideas.

Taking notes gives you the opportunity to paraphrase ideas from outside sources that you do not want to quote. Then, when you begin to write your paper, you will already have your source information organized to fit into your own ideas and thoughts. Additionally, you will already have the bibliographic information on hand, so that you can immediately include in-text citations and add the source to your works cited or reference page.

Evaluate Sources

Make sure you know the author of the source, where their information comes from, and the publication date.

Evaluating your sources will ensure that you only include strong sources to support your ideas. **It is especially important to evaluate Internet sources** to make sure that those sources are credible and relevant to your paper.

Cite Sources! (early and often J)

When you come to a point that you want to incorporate an outside source, make sure to cite the source immediately. If you are not sure whether or not you should cite information or whether that information is common knowledge, ask an instructor or librarian what you should do. Remember, when in doubt, cite your sources.

Know How to Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is putting another person's ideas into your own words- paraphrasing does not mean that you simply change one or two words of the original information. You must think about the idea long enough to be able to summarize it in your own words.

In general, paraphrasing is an effective way to avoid too many quotes with outside sources, which can sometimes minimize the effect of your own voice in the paper. Paraphrases usually transition very well into your own ideas.

Remember, that **paraphrases must be cited**, because you are still using another person's idea.

Know How to Quote

When you quote a source, copy the original wording exactly and put quotation marks at the beginning and the end of the quoted material.

In your paper, make sure to introduce the quote with a signal phrase.

After the quote, provide an explanation for the quote, in terms of how it relates to the rest of the paragraph and the paper as a whole. Quotes do not speak for themselves.

This handout was adapted from "Avoiding Plagiarism", The University of Alabama in Huntsville <http://www.uah.edu/library/turnitin/studentavoidplag2.htm>