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## Chapter 1. How to Write an A+ Research Paper



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This Chapter outlines the logical steps to writing a good research paper. To achieve supreme excellence or perfection in anything you do, you need more than just the knowledge. Like the Olympic athlete aiming for the gold medal, you must have a positive attitude and the belief that you have the ability to achieve it. That is the real start to writing an A+ research paper.

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### Poll

What is your favourite play by Shakespeare?

- Hamlet
- Macbeth
- Merchant of Venice
- Midsummer Night's Dream
- Othello
- Romeo and Juliet
- Tempest
- Twelfth Night
- Other (specify)

### STEP 1. CHOOSE A TOPIC

Choose a topic which interests and challenges you. Your attitude towards the topic may well determine the amount of effort

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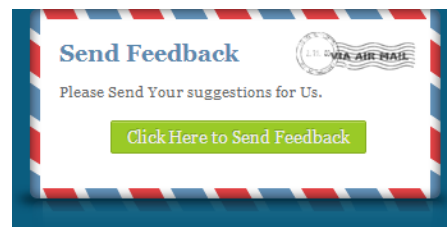
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The recent arrival of a variety of domain name extensions such as .biz (commercial businesses), .pro, .info (info on products / organizations), .name, .ws (WebSite), .cc (Cocos Island) or .sh (St. Helena) or .tv (Tuvalu) may create some confusion as you would not be able to tell whether a .cc or .sh or .tv site is in reality a .com, a .edu, a .gov, a .net, or a .org site. Many of the new extensions have no registration restrictions and are available to anyone who wishes to register a distinct domain name that has not already been taken. For instance, if Books.com is unavailable, you can register as Books.ws or Books.info via a service agent such as [Register.com](#).

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- Government Publications, Guides, Reports
- Magazines, Newspapers
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- [International Public Library](#)
- Subject Specific software (e.g. discovering authors, exploring Shakespeare, etc.)

Check out public and university libraries, businesses, government agencies, as well as contact knowledgeable people in your community.

Read and evaluate. Bookmark your favorite Internet sites. Printout, photocopy, and take notes of relevant information.

As you gather your resources, jot down full bibliographical information (author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, page numbers, URLs, creation or modification dates on Web pages, and your date of access) on your work sheet, printout, or enter the information on your laptop or desktop computer for later retrieval. If printing from the Internet, it is wise to set up the browser to print the URL and date of access for every page. Remember that an article without bibliographical information is useless since you cannot cite its source.

### STEP 3. STATE YOUR THESIS

Do some critical thinking and write your thesis statement down in one sentence. Your thesis statement is like a declaration of your belief. The main portion of your essay will consist of arguments to support and defend this belief.

**STEP 4. MAKE A TENTATIVE OUTLINE**

All points must relate to the same major topic that you first mentioned in your capital Roman numeral.

Example of an outline:

- I. INTRODUCTION - (Brief comment leading into subject matter - Thesis statement on Shakespeare)
- II. BODY - Shakespeare's Early Life, Marriage, Works, Later Years
  - A. Early life in Stratford
    - 1. Shakespeare's family
      - a. Shakespeare's father
      - b. Shakespeare's mother
    - 2. Shakespeare's marriage
      - a. Life of Anne Hathaway
      - b. Reference in Shakespeare's Poems
  - B. Shakespeare's works
    - 1. Plays
      - a. Tragedies
        - i. Hamlet
        - ii. Romeo and Juliet
      - b. Comedies
        - i. The Tempest
        - ii. Much Ado About Nothing
      - c. Histories
        - i. King John
        - ii. Richard III
        - iii. Henry VIII
    - 2. Sonnets
    - 3. Other poems
  - C. Shakespeare's Later Years
    - 1. Last two plays
    - 2. Retired to Stratford
      - a. Death
      - b. Burial
        - i. Epitaph on his tombstone
- III. CONCLUSION
  - A. Analytical summary
    - 1. Shakespeare's early life
    - 2. Shakespeare's works
    - 3. Shakespeare's later years
  - B. Thesis reworded
  - C. Concluding statement

The purpose of an outline is to help you think through your topic carefully and organize it logically before you start writing. A good outline is the most important step in writing a good paper. Check your outline to make sure that the points covered flow logically from one to the other. Include in your outline an INTRODUCTION, a BODY, and a CONCLUSION. Make the first outline tentative.

**INTRODUCTION** - State your thesis and the purpose of your research paper clearly. What is the chief reason you are writing the paper? State also how you plan to approach your topic. Is this a factual report, a book review, a comparison, or an analysis of a problem? Explain briefly the major points you plan to cover in your paper and why readers should be interested in your topic.

**BODY** - This is where you present your arguments to support your thesis statement. Remember the **Rule of 3**, i.e. find 3 supporting arguments for each position you take. Begin with a strong argument, then use a stronger one, and end with the strongest argument for your final point.

**CONCLUSION** - Restate or reword your thesis. Summarize your arguments. Explain why you have come to this particular conclusion.

**STEP 5. ORGANIZE YOUR NOTES**

Organize all the information you have gathered according to your outline. Critically analyze your research data. Using the

best available sources, check for accuracy and verify that the information is factual, up-to-date, and correct. Opposing views should also be noted if they help to support your thesis. This is the most important stage in writing a research paper. Here you will analyze, synthesize, sort, and digest the information you have gathered and hopefully learn something about your topic which is the real purpose of doing a research paper in the first place. You must also be able to effectively communicate your thoughts, ideas, insights, and research findings to others through written words as in a report, an essay, a research or term paper, or through spoken words as in an oral or multimedia presentation with audio-visual aids.

Do not include any information that is not relevant to your topic, and do not include information that you do not understand. Make sure the information that you have noted is carefully recorded and in your own words, if possible.

Plagiarism is definitely out of the question. Document all ideas borrowed or quotes used very accurately. As you organize your notes, jot down detailed bibliographical information for each cited paragraph and have it ready to transfer to your Works Cited page.

Devise your own method to organize your notes. One method may be to mark with a different color ink or use a hi-liter to identify sections in your outline, e.g., IA3b - meaning that the item "Accessing WWW" belongs in the following location of your outline:

- I. Understanding the Internet
  - A. What is the Internet
    - 3. How to "Surf the Net"
      - b. Accessing WWW

Group your notes following the outline codes you have assigned to your notes, e.g., IA2, IA3, IA4, etc. This method will enable you to quickly put all your resources in the right place as you organize your notes according to your outline.

#### STEP 6. WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT

Start with the first topic in your outline. Read all the relevant notes you have gathered that have been marked, e.g. with the capital Roman numeral I.

Summarize, paraphrase or quote directly for each idea you plan to use in your essay. Use a technique that suits you, e.g. write summaries, paraphrases or quotations on note cards, or separate sheets of lined paper. Mark each card or sheet of paper clearly with your outline code or reference, e.g., IB2a or IIC, etc.

Put all your note cards or paper in the order of your outline, e.g. IA, IB, IC. If using a word processor, create meaningful filenames that match your outline codes for easy cut and paste as you type up your final paper, e.g. cut first Introduction paragraph and paste it to IA. Before you know it, you have a well organized term paper completed exactly as outlined.

If it is helpful to you, use a symbol such as "#" to mark the spot where you would like to check back later to edit a paragraph. The unusual symbol will make it easy for you to find the exact location again. Delete the symbol once editing is completed.

#### STEP 7. REVISE YOUR OUTLINE AND DRAFT

Read your paper for any content errors. Double check the facts and figures. Arrange and rearrange ideas to follow your outline. Reorganize your outline if necessary, but always keep the purpose of your paper and your readers in mind. Use a free grammar and proof reading checker such as [Grammarly](#).

#### CHECKLIST ONE:

1. Is my thesis statement concise and clear?
2. Did I follow my outline? Did I miss anything?
3. Are my arguments presented in a logical sequence?

4. Are all sources properly cited to ensure that I am not plagiarizing?
5. Have I proved my thesis with strong supporting arguments?
6. Have I made my intentions and points clear in the essay?

Re-read your paper for grammatical errors. Use a dictionary or a thesaurus as needed. Do a spell check. Correct all errors that you can spot and improve the overall quality of the paper to the best of your ability. Get someone else to read it over. Sometimes a second pair of eyes can see mistakes that you missed.

### ✓ CHECKLIST TWO:

1. Did I begin each paragraph with a proper topic sentence?
2. Have I supported my arguments with documented proof or examples?
3. Any run-on or unfinished sentences?
4. Any unnecessary or repetitious words?
5. Varying lengths of sentences?
6. Does one paragraph or idea flow smoothly into the next?
7. Any spelling or grammatical errors?
8. Quotes accurate in source, spelling, and punctuation?
9. Are all my citations accurate and in correct format?
10. Did I avoid using contractions? Use "cannot" instead of "can't", "do not" instead of "don't"?
11. Did I use third person as much as possible? Avoid using phrases such as "I think", "I guess", "I suppose"
12. Have I made my points clear and interesting but remained objective?
13. Did I leave a sense of completion for my reader(s) at the end of the paper?



The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition, by William Strunk, Jr.

For an excellent source on English composition, check out this classic book by William Strunk, Jr. on the Elements of Style. Contents include: Elementary Rules of Usage, Elementary Principles of Composition, Words & Expressions Commonly Misused, An Approach to Style with a List of Reminders: Place yourself in the background, Revise and rewrite, Avoid fancy words, Be clear, Do not inject opinion, Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity, ... and much more. Details of [The Elements of Style by William Strunk, Jr.](#) partially available online at [Bartleby.com](#). Note: William Strunk, Jr. (1869–1946). [The Elements of Style](#) was first published in 1918.

### STEP 8. TYPE FINAL PAPER

All formal reports or essays should be typewritten and printed, preferably on a good quality printer.

Read the assignment sheet again to be sure that you understand fully what is expected of you, and that your essay meets the requirements as specified by your teacher. Know how your essay will be evaluated.

Proofread final paper carefully for spelling, punctuation, missing or duplicated words. Make the effort to ensure that your final paper is clean, tidy, neat, and attractive.

Aim to have your final paper ready a day or two before the deadline. This gives you peace of mind and a chance to triple check. Before handing in your assignment for marking, ask yourself: "Is this the VERY BEST that I can do?"

