

STEPS IN PREPARING AN ESSAY OR RESEARCH PAPER

<p>Step 1 Identify and develop your topic</p>	<p>Do you have to write an assignment, a thesis, give a lecture or presentation? How long does the assignment have to be? Do you need current or historical information? Does the information apply to a specific country? When do you need the information? What languages are you able to read? Do you need information from books, journals, newspapers, Internet? For which subject do you need the information? Is the topic sufficiently narrow? Is the topic too general? - <u>Try limiting by using:</u> a specific time period; a specific geographical area; a specific group of people; a particular aspect of the subject from the viewpoint of a specific discipline</p> <p>Example <i>The past five years</i> <i>South Africa</i> <i>Undergraduates students</i></p>
<p>Step 2 Finding your information</p>	<p>Select an information source: Reference works? Handbooks? Journal articles? Internet articles?</p> <p>Identify the key terms: A key term is an important component of a topic. A topic can also have more than one key term - depending on the complexity of the topic</p> <p>Example: <i>If you have to write a short essay on the use of the Internet by undergraduate students in South Africa, with particular attention to electronic mail. The key terms will be: Internet; Electronic mail; Undergraduate students; South Africa</i></p> <p>Identify the search terms: It is important to use search term to ensure you do not miss any important records. <u>The following can help to make sure you have covered all the possibilities:</u> Synonyms; Singular and plural forms; Related terms; Narrower terms; Broader terms; English or American spelling; Abbreviations or acronym; Combine the search terms</p> <p>Use Boolean operators: AND, OR, NOT OR Template terminology: Any of these words; All these words; Exact phrase</p>
<p>Step 3 Evaluating the information found</p>	<p>Exclude irrelevant data Compare the information found in different sources Interpret information with regard to your topic Select the relevant parts of aspects for your assignment</p>
<p>Step 4 Writing the paper</p>	<p>Cover page should contain the following: Title of the assignment; Student information; Initials and surname; Student number Course name / code; Name of the lecturer;</p> <p>Table of Contents: List of headings that appears in the text, along with the page numbers on which they appear</p> <p>Introduction: It serves as a starting point for the discussion of the theme of the assignment. The background for the theme should be sketched and the theme itself should be placed in perspective.</p> <p>Contents: Consists of the explanation and discussion of the topic. It is divided into headings and subheadings that are determined by the topic of the assignment. Headings should form a logical unit. Make sure there is a balance between different sections - do not concentrate only on those sections in which are interested</p> <p>NB! The contents must be more than a number of linked fragments. You need connecting sentences at the end of each concluding paragraph Headings and subheadings should be used and numbered consistently</p> <p>Example <i>4. Journals as information sources</i> <i>4.1 Advantages</i> <i>4.2 Disadvantages</i></p> <p>Only use acknowledged abbreviations as found in dictionaries. Use citations sparingly - rather give the information in your own words Do not use the personal form (I, us you) in a formal scientific assignment</p> <p>Conclusion Summing up deductions and / or recommendations must round off any assignment. The logical line of argument that is followed in the discussion must be summed up in a meaningful conclusion</p>

Step 5 References

It is essential to use references in your assignment. References give recognition to the original author. References provide proof of the source of your information. References to recognized sources lend authority to your views. The list of sources provides additional sources to the topic.

Citations and Bibliography

Citing in the text

In the text of your report, acknowledge each author in a brief reference that refers to the list of sources.

Example: *This view is rejected by Roberts (1972:10) OR Men in their 20's show an inclination to suicide (Kreitman, 1977:18)*

Direct citations

That is the author's own words and should be used ONLY if the original is so well stated, that putting it in your own words would be detrimental to the final effect. Never make direct quotations to simply avoid translation problems.

NOTE: The difference in punctuation when a quotation forms part of the sentence, OR when it does not form part of a complete sentence:

Example:

Visser (1983:12) contends that "there must be a conclusion for all sentences" OR

They pass the remark that "few such cases exist" (compare De Beer, 1986:3) OR

"It was believed that the baby born with teeth was doomed". (Smith, 1977:70) OR

Visser (1983:12) asserts: "There must be a conclusion for all sentences."

Indirect citations

Take care of the spirit of the original words, when citing sources in your own words. **NB!** Vary the style of citation in your assignment.

Example: *Comparing the view of Jones (1986:15) with that of Smith (1994:147), it_OR_ This argument is supported by Cogan (1089:156)*

OR According to King (1995:21) it is

Citing in the list of sources

Your textual references should be supported by a list of sources (**Bibliography/References**)

The purpose of a bibliography: References give recognition to the original author. References provide proof of the source of your information.

References to recognized sources lend authority to your views. References list additional sources to the topic. The reader of the study should be able to trace the sources listed **NB!!!** Complete, correct and full bibliographical details. Source list consists of one alphabetical list. Arranged alphabetically according to author's names of all the books, journals, newspaper reports and other material which you used. Do not number the references. Be consequent with your style through the list. You can also underline or **bold** the titles instead of write them in *italics*.

Arrange the sources by the same author as follows: Chronologically from old to new. First works by the author on his own. Then works involving a co-author (Jones & Smith). Leave sufficient spaces (lines) between references so that the references "stand out". In a case of two sources by the same author in the same year, use an **a** or **b** after the year

Example:

Botha, J.R. (1987a). *Die mens op aarde*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg. **AND**

Botha, J.R. (1987b). *Bevolkingsgroei op ons planet*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Citations within the Text:

One author: Stevens (1999:4) concluded that

Two authors:

Gardner and Shelton (1967:10) refer to paralysed patients **OR**

All procedures must be explained (Gardner & Shelton 1967:74)

Three authors and more:

According to Meyer et al. (1973:101) photosynthesis

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