

Taking Research Notes



When it comes time to write your paper, all of the research in the world is useless to you unless it is organized. By establishing an organizational system before you begin your research, you will save yourself time and unnecessary frustration.

Taking Research Notes is an on-line tutorial I developed. This tutorial is designed to help you learn how to take effective notes while preparing to write a research paper.

By taking the tutorial, you will learn:

- the importance of a bibliographic note card.
- the skills necessary for making sure you know from what source your notes were taken.
- how file folders and databases can be used in note taking.
- some specific strategies to avoid plagiarism.

Taking Research Notes is available at <http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/research-notes>.

Suggestion for Success

According to Robert A. Harris writing in his *Using Sources Effectively*, “A substantial amount of plagiarism is committed unintentionally, simply because the writer did not know the rules or forms of citation. Yet the penalty for such behavior is often severe because plagiarism is considered one of the most serious forms of academic dishonesty.” By taking clear research notes, you avoid the possibility of accidentally plagiarizing another author’s work.

Because an author is ultimately responsible for the veracity of his/her work, accidental plagiarism can still be grounds for failing a course or other disciplinary action.

If you write out a Bibliography Card that includes all of the information you need for a proper citation, you can make sure that you do not accidentally plagiarize.

Harris, Robert. Using Sources Effectively: Strengthening Your Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism. Los Angeles, CA: Pynceak Publishing, 2002.



Three Common Types of Accidental Plagiarism (Which Good Research Notes Help You Avoid)

Word-for-Word Plagiarism

You commit word-for-word plagiarism if you take the exact words from a book, article, Internet site, or some other source without putting quote marks around the words you copied. Even if you take only a unique short phrase of as few as two words from another author, you could be guilty of word-for-word plagiarism. On your note cards, make sure that you put quotation marks around any text you take from an author. My personal recommendation is that if you use more than three words in a row, you need quotation marks.

Plagiarism by Paraphrase

You commit plagiarism by paraphrase when you take and put another author's writing into your own words without giving him/her proper credit. It is generally a good idea to paraphrase an author's work as you take your research notes. But make sure you have all the necessary information so that you can give the author credit when you use your paraphrase in your research paper.

Mosaic Plagiarism

You commit mosaic plagiarism when you take a series of short passages or phrases from the works of another author or authors and string them together without citing the other author(s) and putting quote marks around the words that are exactly the same. A sign of good scholarship is the ability to make connections between several different authors. Because it is impressive, be sure to cite all of the authors whose work you use.

On-Line Resources

Please remember that this workbook is designed so that the on-line resources lead you to additional resources on the topic.

Taking Research Notes

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/research-notes>

Three Common Types of Accidental Plagiarism

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h005.html>

Writing a Proper Citation

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/citations/index.html>



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