

Audience: Academic communities, like Southwestern Illinois College, use the research paper not only to encourage reading on a topic but also thinking and writing. Even though the instructor may be the only expected audience for a student's research paper, assume a general community of unknown readers. Therefore, unfamiliar words, phrases, and/or ideas in a research paper must be defined. Write as if the people you are talking to do not know anything about the topic of your paper.

Purpose: The purpose of a research paper is often to persuade readers. Therefore, an argument, point of view, or thesis should be in the research paper near the beginning. This gives the readers an idea of what to expect in the research paper.

Voice: Readers also expect to hear the writer's ideas. Rather than assuming a source has talked about an idea better than you could, summarize or paraphrase information. Then use the summaries and paraphrases to support your own new and original ideas.

Pre-writing: When an instructor assigns a research paper, start with immediately by gathering information. The information gathered should be from a variety of sources: books, periodicals, the field, the media, and the

internet. In addition to the instructor, the librarians and Success Center can also suggest sources.

Drafting: After reading the information you found, think about the paper topic. Turn these thoughts into an argument, point of view, or thesis about the topic. Organize the information gathered in a way that supports the argument, point of view, or thesis. After organizing the information, begin writing the paper. Use the details from sources to support your viewpoints and be sure to cite them correctly.

Revising: Most sources should be summarized or paraphrased, and the direct quotations from sources should be brief. Also use transition words when changing from one idea to another.

Reading, thinking, and writing take time and effort. Therefore, the sooner the paper is started the better. If you still have questions about the process of writing a research paper, ask for an English tutor in the Success Center.