

## USING REFERENCE SOURCES

A library is one of your greatest resources to excel. It can be used to study for tests and quizzes and to write papers. In this lesson you will learn about finding things in a library and the main elements of a research paper.

### **Q: How do I find information in the library?**

Use four main resources.

1. *Card catalog.* This is a catalog of cards, usually found in small file drawers, that describe books in the library. Many libraries now have these "cards" on computers so you don't actually look at the cards.

For both, the process to find things in the library is the same. Books are cataloged in two ways; by author and by topic. So, if you want a book by a certain author, Mark Twain, you would look under "T" or type in the name. For a topic, e.g. steamboats, you would look under "S" or type in the topic.

You will probably see many cards on every author or topic. You will only get a little information on these cards. One thing you will be told is the "call numbers." You want to write these down because this number will let you find the books on the library shelves.

2. *Reference Books.* These include encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, and fact books (maps, charts, etc.). These books are usually collected in one section of the library. You can look them up or ask the librarian.

3. *Readers' Guides*. There are a number of readers' guides that tell you how to find magazine and journal articles by topic. A well known one is Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature. It is published monthly and includes many periodicals.

You can search for topics by month and year to find out when and in what magazines articles were written. This service is also available by computer

in many libraries and many libraries have several guides available. Ask your librarian.

4. *Librarians*. Librarians are a great source of information and a great source of information about finding information. You should not be reluctant to ask for help either at school or your community library.

Libraries are great places to spend time. You don't need a specific plan to enjoy a library. If you are looking for information on a particular topic, a good strategy is to find the topic on a card then look for the number and browse books around that number. Libraries put books on the same subject together on their shelves.

Finally, don't overlook electronic networks such as America Online. There are many ways you can find information using these networks.

### **Q: How do I do a research paper?**

First, all the ideas about writing that were presented in Lessons 21 and 22 apply to research papers. This means you should be systematic.

A research paper should be well written and make a clear main point. The difference is that your main point must be supported by documentation.

Usually, a research paper will consist of a title, an introduction, a thesis statement that states the main points, a body of support or evidence for the thesis statement, a conclusion, a list of sources cited as evidence, and a bibliography. Many teachers have different requirements for research papers so you should make sure you find out exactly what your teacher wants.

### **Q: What is included in the parts of a research paper?**

The **introduction** is a general statement of the problem or issues addressed in the paper. Its purpose is to interest the reader and say

why the topic is important. At the end of their introductions, most writers state their thesis.

The **thesis** is a clear statement of the main point of the paper. It is usually best to take a specific position that is believable and that you can support.

The **body** of the paper presents evidence to support the thesis. This evidence usually includes facts, details, quotations, and examples that confirm the thesis. It is very important for the evidence to be convincing and well organized.

The **conclusion** is usually a restatement or summary of the thesis as an established position rather than one to be proven. The conclusion is often one paragraph.

The research cited in the paper must be documented in the **references** and **bibliography**. These are lists of sources you read to learn about the topic. Teachers have different formats to write these so you should check to see how your teacher wants you to present references.

Remember as you read, to record all your sources so you will remember them. Most suggest that you write these on index cards and keep them in alphabetical order by author or by topic. If you want to use a quote, write it down on the card with the page number. Be sure to write it accurately.

Don't think you will remember all your sources; you probably won't unless you write them on your cards. The reference sources are usually the last thing you do; you're tired and sometimes grouchy and it's a real pain to have to search for sources you have used. So, write down your sources as you do your research.

Finally, start early. Research papers usually require extra effort and the expectations of teachers are high. Give yourself plenty of time.

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