

Beginning the Research Paper—How to Make Note Cards

1. Choose a topic.
2. Do some general background reading and then write your prospectus.

What is this?

A paragraph that says what you want to learn about in your paper and names specific subtopics you want to do more research on.

Non-Example: Quakers

I'm going to write about the Quakers. The Quakers came to the colony of Pennsylvania in the late 1600s. They bought land from the Indians instead of just taking it. They believed everyone was equal.

Example:

I'm interested in looking at the connection between Quakers and the women's suffrage movement. The Quakers believed all human beings were equal in God's eyes, whether they were Quaker, Protestant, black, white, Native American, etc. They were considered radical in the seventeenth century because they said that women were allowed to speak at Church. I learned that a couple of important leaders in the women's suffrage in the 1800s and 1900s were Quakers. I plan on doing more research about how the Quakers' religious beliefs influenced the American women's suffrage movement.

3. Find some sources—(reqs = 3 books, 2 print sources)
4. Begin making your notecards.

How do I make notecards?

There are two types of notecards: source cards and research cards.

I. Source Cards

You will make one of these when you find a source that you are going to use in your paper. The purpose of this card is to record the bibliographic information. Here is an example:

Source #1
Farah, Mounir A., and Andrea Berens Karls. <i>World History: The Human Experience - The Modern Era</i> . New York: Glencoe, 2001.

You won't have that many source cards—probably 4-7. But you need them!

II. Research Cards

You will make one of these any time you find a fact that you want to use in your paper.

Every notecard ALWAYS needs 4 items on it.

1. Card topic—think of it as the title or main idea
2. Source #--which source did you find this info in?
3. Information (quoted or paraphrased)
4. Page you found the information on

Here is an example:

Original text from source:

"In truth, Douglas did not believe that slavery was actually right, nor did Lincoln in 1858 believe that it was wrong enough to justify direct intervention in the affairs of states where it was already domesticated. Nor did Lincoln really believe more than Douglas that African Americans were entirely the social equals of white, the difference on this point between them being more of degree than substance. But differences in degrees can be critical, too. For Lincoln in 1858, African Americans were certainly the equals of whites in enough sense to make enslaving them wrong, and a wrong that should be contained wherever there was power and opportunity to contain it. For Douglas, African Americans were so far from being the equals of whites that the misfortune of their enslavement was simply not worth antagonizing half the Union, especially when half the continent was at stake."

Lincoln and Douglas—views on slavery Source #3

Lincoln and Douglas both thought slavery was wrong, and they also both thought that African Americans were inferior to whites. However, Lincoln thought that African Americans were on a high enough level that slavery was definitely wrong and needed to be stopped from spreading. For Douglas, the trouble that challenging slavery would cause definitely outweighed the wrongs of slavery, since he felt that African Americans were VERY inferior.

p.81

Lincoln on slavery and U.S.

Source #1

"'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it (...); or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new -- North as well as South."

p. 2

Notecard Tips

- To prevent plagiarism, close the book while you are writing your notecard—this will force you to put the information in your own words.
- Write only 1 main point per card—don't combine different topics on 1 card.
- Only write down information that is related to your statement of purpose.
- Write only essential words, abbreviate when possible.
- Be accurate—when writing down facts and statistics, double-check your notecard against the source.
- Identify direct quotes with quotation marks—and don't forget to write down who said it!
- Use ellipses points (...) when you leave out non-essential words from a quote.
- Distinguish between fact and opinion, if necessary.

