

# CONDUCTING RESEARCH & NOTE TAKING

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## STEP 1: Reading

A. Skim the article getting a quick overview of the material, and determine how the article is relevant to your research

B. Read the article

- i. Be selective about what you read – there is no need to read all of each and every work you choose. Decide what is essential and leave the rest.
- ii. Answer your research question—where is the evidence you are seeking? What arguments about your topic is the author making?
- iii. Manage your energy—active reading can be tiring. Give yourself breaks between chapters or articles.



[More on active reading.](#)

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## STEP 2: Organizing Sources

A. Have a folder system (or file/pile system if working with printed documents)

- i. Label or store sources in High, Medium, and Low priority piles or folders

B. As you first select material, summarize each source in 1-3 lines summarizing the key points as they relate to your essay.

C. Store and label documents in a functional way.

- i. Save PDFs and other documents by titling them "AUTHOR\_TITLE\_YEAR\_DATE\_ACCESSED.pdf"

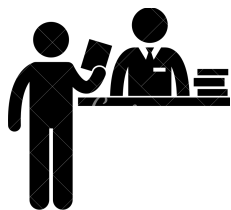
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## STEP 3: Taking Notes

- A. Record citation information as you go.
- B. Take active, in-depth notes on your high-priority sources
  - I. Write down your own ideas about the work you are reading
  - II. Summarize key points in your own words
  - III. Highlight very important quotes, terms, or ideas
- C. If you're taking notes on a separate piece of paper or document **ALWAYS** put quotation marks around direct quotes. Record what page the quote is from in case you want to include it in your paper or revisit that passage.
- D. Write down any connections you are making, key words or authors you have discovered, and which of your arguments the source supports.

At certain points of the research process you will feel uncertain and perhaps anxious. This is because you are consuming a large amount of new and perhaps contradictory information.

When you are feeling uncertain, research suggests that it is helpful to seek out someone to verbalize your thoughts with or to provide advice. Doing this will help you clarify your own thoughts, as well as help you position yourself within all this new information. Peers, librarians, your instructor, or (in a pinch) even someone who knows very little about the topic can assist with this process. Once you develop and clarify your position on the topic, you will likely feel more confident moving forward with your appraisal and searching processes.



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