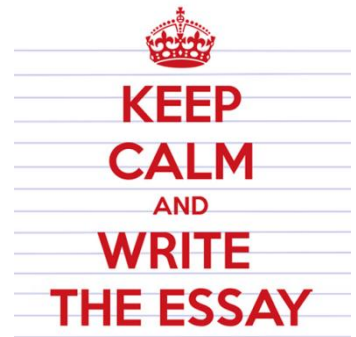




Doing research and planning for an essay.

Adapted from: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/672>; <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/writing-help/how-to-do-research-for-an-essay>

Conducting systematic research is a crucial part of writing academically. However planning and finding the relevant material for an essay can be tough and time-consuming—especially in a second language. This four-part guide briefly shows how best to plan for an essay and find sufficient and high-quality material for your literature review.



It is important to understand that it is impossible to find and read everything on the essay topic. An essay should be academically 'robust' which means based a good level of decent sources, but should not try and cover everything as this will distract and dilute from the main topic of the essay. To help stay focused on the essay question and find this 'right' balance of sources, consider these strategies:

1) First begin with the reading list from your course (or essay reading list if there is one specifically). There is a reason your teachers have selected these texts! Also go back to the lecture notes and hand-outs from your classes on topic relevant to the essay as this will be good for developing your background knowledge and identifying areas of additional material to find.

2) Then expand this initial review by:

- **Check the bibliographies** in the texts from your course Reading lists. If an author is seen several times then it's probably worth finding out more about them.
- **Find similar material** in the sections in the library that are relevant to your topic.
- **Use the library catalogues** to search using keywords, subjects, or by author. This should include academic journals which will often be more recent (could be in electronic form) as well as books. CRAI (Universidad del Rosario research center) staff are very professional and always ready to help.
- Don't forget recent developments in the field by checking the **latest news and current** affairs in the research area (remember to find out if the source is reliable).

3) What to do with all of this material that you have identified?

First, **read the abstract** to see if it is relevant to your essay. If it is, then continue with the introduction and conclusion, and finally, if it continues to be relevant then continue with the main body of the text.

Note taking is key here - remember underline and annotate information relevant to the essay.

As you gather information it is important to **organise it in a systematic way**. Some effective ones for writing in a second language are typically brainstorming and other graphics organisers like taxonomies - for eliciting, organizing and developing background knowledge

Word banks for new vocabulary and concepts to learn and record these as you find them. Remember, understanding every word in texts is not necessary, just for the reoccurring ones or the key concepts.

4) When you feel ready, take these ideas and begin to apply them to the traditional "Five Paragraph Essay" (unless your teacher has specifically told you to use another approach). See the ask document for more information <http://repository.urosario.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10336/13156/The%20Five%20Paragraph%20Essay.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

This will provide you with a plan - use it as it will continue to develop and edit your first drafts of the essay.