Starting your Research Paper

Step 1: Analyze and understand the assignment
Step 2: Choose your topic
Step 3: Develop your thesis
Step 4: Gather your sources
Step 5: Organize and create an outline
Step 6: Write a first draft
Step 7: Revise and proofread

1. **Analyze and understand the assignment**
   - Examine your assignment so you can understand what is required.
   - If there is any confusion, try to clear it up with your instructor.

2. **Choose your topic**
   - The topic should not only fulfill the requirements of the assignment, but should also interest you.
   - Initially, you should start with a broad topic. Then, narrow that topic down by making a list of 3 – 6 questions that you would like to know the answers to.
   - Online sources that can help you search for a topic:
     - [www.lamission.edu/library/resources.aspx](http://www.lamission.edu/library/resources.aspx)
     - [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)

3. **Develop your thesis**
   - The thesis statement is the main idea of an essay. It can provide information, suggest an idea to consider, or persuade the reader to agree with a certain view.
   - A good thesis should be clear and precise.

4. **Gather your sources**
   - Begin by searching resources at the library:
     - [http://www.lamission.edu/library/](http://www.lamission.edu/library/)
     - Click on “Mission College library catalog” to find books in the library.
     - Click on EbscoHost or National Newspapers for articles from journals, magazines, or newspapers.
   - If you find useful books and articles, write down the bibliographic information because this could lead to other interesting/useful sources.
5. **Organize and create an outline**
   - The information and ideas you organize will serve as the basis for your outline.
   - Your paper should be made up of three parts:
     i. **Introduction**: This is where you let the readers know what your topic is by stating your thesis sentence. It tells the reader what the body of your paragraph is going to contain. It also arouses the reader’s curiosity about the topic.
     
     ii. **Body**: The body of the paragraph consists of 3 -5 paragraphs containing information that support your thesis. This is where the information you have organized comes in. It is important to try and limit each body paragraph to one idea.
     
     iii. **Conclusion**: This is the last paragraph of your paper. It summarizes all the points you made and restates your thesis while providing a larger significance to your issue or topic.

6. **Write a first draft**:
   - After you have made an outline, begin writing your paper.

7. **Revise and proofread**
   - After you have completed your first draft, revise it. Make any changes that seem necessary.
   
   - When you are finished revising, proofread your paper to make sure there aren’t any mistakes.