

Part 3: Gathering Information

You must gather your information before you can write your thesis, construct your outline, or write your essay. You must have all of the information at your disposal before you can decide what you want to argue in your essay.

You should begin with the primary text. You should go through the primary text or texts for your essay with the chosen topic in mind. Find as much information about that topic as you can within your primary text.

Collect your information and write it down in point form so that it is concise and easy to reference.

There will be a wealth of information in the primary texts that will not apply to your topic, but you must be rigorous and stick to the topic when researching the essay. At this stage, you should only collect information that pertains to the topic of the essay.

Remember, the only information that you will present in the essay is that which will support your central argument or Thesis.

Keeping Track of Primary Source Information:

Notate all information that you collect when researching. Your rough notes should include the following details:

- 1) Author(s). If your text is from an anthology, a critical study, a journal, a periodical, or a collection of essays or articles, write down the title of the book and the name(s) of the Editors.
- 2) Title of the text.
- 3) Page # that your information appears on in the book, or the line number if your information is from a poem.
- 4) Publication Data, such as the name of the Publisher, where it was published, and the year that it was published.

Keeping Track of Secondary Source Information:

Keeping track of the secondary source information is just as important for the secondary information as the primary source material. One of the biggest mistakes that you can make is to copy commentary (whether as whole sentences or as key phrases) out of a secondary source without keeping track of who the writer is.

Follow the same three steps as stated above for keeping track of the primary source information while researching the secondary source information.

Plagiarism and Academic Fraud:

When it comes to writing your essay, you must provide secondary source information for all facts, opinions, ideas, and quotes that are not your own, or else you are committing plagiarism.

According to the **Heritage Handbook for English**, plagiarism or academic fraud occurs when you copy, reproduce or paraphrase significant portions of someone else's words or ideas without proper acknowledgement of these sources. Plagiarism is considered to be a serious offence.