

## Getting Ready for Your Research Paper: Step Two – Charting a Direction & Setting Goals

Before you jump into taking notes from your sources, complete these two important steps:

1. Make decisions about *what* to look for
2. Think about *why* you need it.

This will help you use your time wisely and focus your research/approach rather than taking extensive notes on articles that you'll quickly discard later.

**Some exercises to help you organize:**

1. Revisit your research proposal, if you developed one, for essential issues. Research those issues.  
**Example:** *I want to address people who think they need a tan in order to be beautiful. My role is to investigate the facts and explore options for those who desire a good tan. I need information on skin types, sun exposure, tanning beds, and types of skin damage.*
2. List key words, ideas, and issues you must explore in the paper. a) Jot down ideas or words in a rough list. b) Expand the list to show hierarchy of major and minor ideas.
3. Rough out an initial outline of key sections you will develop for the paper.
4. Ask a thorough set of questions to help develop ideas/ issues.
5. Use various modes of development (i.e., definitions, explanations, causes /effects) to identify key issues.
6. Search issues across the disciplines (i.e., economics, psychology, sociology, biology) to find unique angles.
7. Let your thesis sentence point you toward the basic issues.  
**Example:** *Television can have positive effects on a child's language development.*  
*Consequence* 1- *Television introduces new words.*  
2- *Television reinforces word usage and proper syntax.*  
3- *Television provides the subtle rhythms and musical effects of accomplished speakers*

Lester, James D. and James D. Lester, Jr. *Writing Research Papers; A Complete Guide. Tenth Edition. New York: Longman, 2002.*