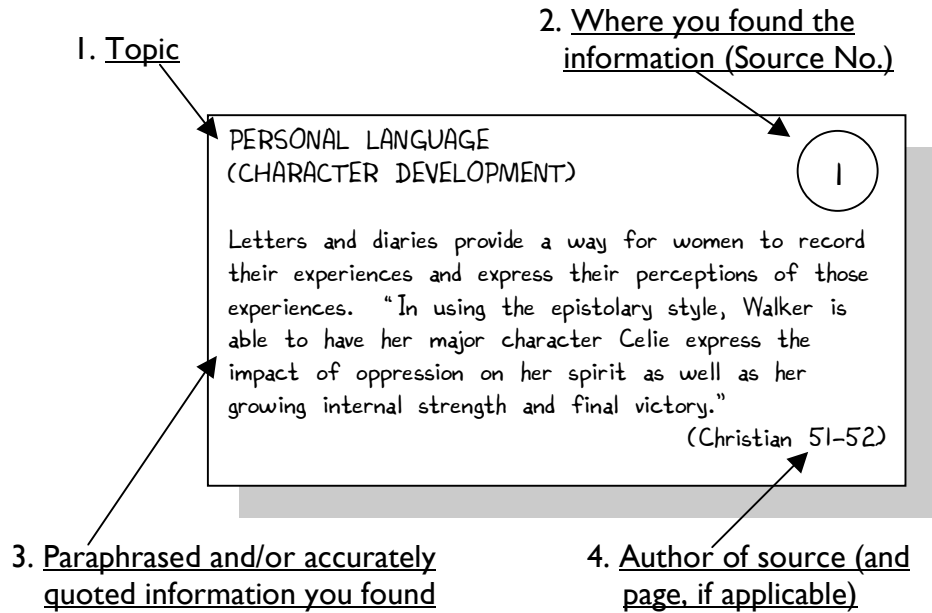


Research Note Cards: 10 Tips for Taking Notes

By Grace Fleming, *Homework/Study Tips*. Website. *About.com* 2008; visited 1 Apr 2008
<<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/paperassignments/a/researchnotes.htm>>

Your research note cards (as distinct from your bibliography cards) should include all the information necessary to write your research essay. You should take extreme care as you create these note cards.

1. Start with a fresh pack of research note cards. Large (4" x 6"), lined cards are best, especially if you want to make your own detailed personal notes. Also, consider color coding your cards by topic to keep your paper organized from the start.
2. Devote an entire note card to each idea or note. **DON'T** try to fit two sources (quotations and notes) on one card. No sharing space!
3. Gather more than you need. Use the library and the Internet to find potential sources for your research paper. You should continue to research until you have quite a few potential sources — about three times as many as your teacher recommends.
4. Narrow down your sources. As you read your potential sources, you will find that some are helpful, others are not, and some will repeat the same information you already have. This is how you narrow your list down to include the most solid sources.
5. Record as you go. From each source, write down any notes or quotations that could be useful in your paper. As you take notes, try to paraphrase all information. This reduces the chances of committing accidental “word-for-word” plagiarism.
6. Include all key information. For each note you will need to record:
 - Topic heading
 - Source number (with the same number as the corresponding Bibliography source it refers to)
 - Content of note (paraphrased and/or quoted)
 - Your own personal comments
 - Author's name
 - Page number (if applicable)You may also choose to include the following (although you should have this information on your Bibliography cards):
 - Title of reference (book, article, interview, etc.)
 - Reference publication information, including publisher, date, place, year, issue, volume.
7. Create your own system and stick to it. For instance, you may want to pre-mark each card with spaces for each category (“Topic Heading:_____,” etc.) just to make sure you don't leave anything out.
8. Be exact. If at any time you write down information word for word, be sure to include all punctuation marks, capitalization, and breaks exactly as they appear in the source. Before you leave any source, double-check your notes for accuracy.
9. If you think it *might* be useful, write it down. Don't pass over information because you're just not sure whether it will be useful! This is a very common and costly mistake in research. More often than not, you find that the passed-over tidbit is critical to your paper, and then you won't find it again.
10. Avoid using abbreviations and code words as you record notes — especially if you plan to quote. Your own writing can look completely foreign to you later. You may not be able to understand your own clever codes after a day or two, either.



Once you have written the information down on the note cards, you only need to go back and organize your cards by topic. Group together all the cards that have the same topic (i.e. all the cards titled: "Personal Language" should be together). When you finish, you should have your cards in piles, one topic per pile. You can have any number of piles and any number of cards in each pile. The length and detail of your paper will determine how many piles and cards you have.

Your piles may look like:

