



## **STEP #1: A, B, C's of Getting Started**

### **A. "What am I supposed to do?"**

- ✓ Take some time to look at your assignment closely and determine exactly what you are required to do. Try highlighting the key requirements with a yellow marker.
- ✓ What is your topic? If your assignment allows you to choose your own topic, be sure to narrow it so that it is suitable for a short paper. (Native Americans vs. Yaqui Indians in Arizona in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) Go to <http://www.pima.edu/library/help/how-to/selecting/index.shtml> for help on selecting a research topic. Ask your teacher or a librarian for their opinion of the topic you select before getting started.
- ✓ How will you be graded? Has a rubric been provided? If so, use it to see what aspects of the assignment your teacher will emphasize during grading, and be sure to do them well!
- ✓ What is the due date? Mark important due dates throughout the project in your planner or calendar.
- ✓ Take a look at a sample research paper:  
<http://www.dianahacker.com/pdfs/hacker-Daly-MLA.pdf>

### **B. "What's a thesis statement?"**

A thesis statement tells what you believe and what you are setting out to prove in your paper. One trick with a thesis is that you won't necessarily *know* what you believe until you investigate the subject a bit. You can begin with a "preliminary thesis" and change it as you become familiar with the subject. Sometimes a thesis statement is formulated after notes are taken and before outlining; check your teacher's preference. A good thesis statement should be a statement with which a person with a different point of view might disagree. Your job is to defend your statement with factual research.

*Thesis statement example:*

*The Internet is a great source of information but should be used cautiously.*

Here are two websites that can help you to develop a thesis statement:

<http://www.sdst.org/shs/library/thesis.html>

[http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\\_statement.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml)

### **C. “How do I *begin*?” Focusing your research...**

The easiest way to organize your research is to take notes as you consult a variety of sources. You will waste time, however, if you take notes on EVERY fact you find.

To focus your reading and note taking, write on an index card:

Write what you hope to prove about your topic, also known as your thesis.

**Topic:** Violence on television  
*If a thesis statement is required:*  
**Prove:** (thesis) Television violence increases aggressive behavior in teenagers.  
**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to present evidence that suggests that violent television causes aggressive behavior in teens.  
**Questions:**

1. How much television do teens watch?
2. How do we define “violent?”
3. Have there been any scientific studies on this?
4. What percentage of TV programs are violent?
5. Has teen violence increased?