

Fourth Grade Animal Project

How to Write a Research Paper

1. Carefully think about, and imagine, what animal you would like to study very carefully for four weeks. Once your parents and your teacher have given you research material - essays, articles, magazines, pictures, online printouts - you are ready for the next phase.
2. Gather your information by reading, looking at pictures, or talking to people who know about your animal. Take notes as you gather information. One way to do this is to write key words and phrases on notecards, with one idea per card. Another is to write notes on paper with space between the notes so you can cut them apart later. Notes about things you already knew would come first, then maybe a list of questions, and then writing down things as you learn them. Again, keep each piece of information on a separate card or separate line on paper with space to cut them apart.
3. Make a list of the topics you came up with for writing about your animal. Then organize your note cards, or cut apart your note pages and organize your lines, according to their topic. So all notes about your animal's place on the earth will be grouped with Habitat, all notes about their physical characteristics will be together, all notes about their diet will be together, etc. Once you have your piles of cards or lines, you can choose an order for your topics and write them down as a list. This is your **OUTLINE**.
4. Arrange each topic. You will now put your cards/lines for each topic on a desk or on the floor and arrange them so that you end up having them in a pile that makes a good order for writing about that topic. Group facts about your animal's trunk together, about their limbs together, so there is coherence, or order, in the flow of sentences. When you are finished, you will have one pile for each topic in a good order for writing.
5. Then you can begin to write out those pieces of information. Each topic will be at least one paragraph of your final report. Your first sentence should capture your reader. This will be either easy or hard to write. You can read your ideas to your parents to see what they think about your opening sentence. Your last sentence should bring your paper to a nice close. This can also be difficult. Work with your parents if you want help. Once you have turned each of your topic cards into a piece of your written report, you will have one long paper, with many paragraphs. This is your **FIRST DRAFT**. Read it over, and correct spelling, punctuation, move sentences around if you need to. Then ask your parents to read it and see what does and doesn't work. Take their corrections and write a **SECOND DRAFT**. Send this to me.
6. Once you get my corrected version, copy your report on Main Lesson Book pages, and voila! Your research paper is complete!