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Video Script written for The Source – a student writing resource for DeVry University

Taking Notes

Hi, it's Jennifer again! So you've picked your topic and you're ready to start your research. You can learn more about this in the Research Video, but right now, let me talk about one aspect of the research process that's especially important...taking notes. As you're deciding on your topic and finding good sources, taking good notes is essential. First and foremost, since you'll need to cite your sources in a bibliography, make sure you take down all of the relevant bibliographical information you find.

Some examples of important info include the author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, and Internet address. At DeVry we use the APA format, so be sure to review what you need to know to properly cite in that style, and jot that information down as you go. You can find more detailed information about APA citations in another video, but I'll go over in-text citations briefly here.

The APA format requires an author-date style for in-text citations. For example, if you introduce a quote with the author's name, you would follow the name with the year in parentheses. Then, at the end of the quoted material, you would put the page number in parentheses using a "p" "period" "page number" format. So, make sure you also keep track of that information in your notes while you're doing research.

Citing sources correctly is imperative to avoiding plagiarism, so it's important to learn the process. If you have questions, refer to your course home or ask your instructor.

Back to the notes! To make sure your notes are useable later, be brief but understandable. Don't write your entire paper in your notes! Another suggestion I have is to write down any great ideas that come to you—even if you have to stop in the middle of writing something else. Don't let those moments of genius slip away!

You'll write more notes when you get to the outline process, but jotting down ideas and source information is a great start. I hope this will help you decide on a topic and take those ever-important notes. Have fun writing! Good luck!