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Many students are surprised to find that they become more interested in a topic after they've learned more about it—even when they did not expect to enjoy it. If you're stuck with a topic that makes your eyes glaze over, try discussing the topic with others who may help you find a more interesting angle. You also might try thinking about what makes this topic interesting to other people. As you find out more, you may discover something there that interests you after all.

What You Can Handle

Some topics are hard to handle because they are too large, or *broad*. "The American Revolution" is an example of such a topic. Seasoned scholars have written volumes on this subject, but no single person can cover every aspect of this major event in just one paper. Instead, focus on narrowing down your topic to answer favorite questions you may



Ready Set

**REVIEW****Practice Taking Notes**

1. Suppose that you are writing a social studies paper about knights during the Middle Ages in Europe. The passage below is from a book that you have labeled source #4. Make three note cards based on the passage.

When a nobleman became a professional soldier, he was called a knight. Knights followed special rules of behavior. These rules, which were called *chivalry*, required that a knight be brave, treat his enemies fairly and respectfully, be honest, and be loyal. He also had to be polite to women.

For protection in battle, a knight wore a heavy metal helmet and suit of armor and carried a shield. He also carried a sword and other weapons such as a *lance*, or long pole.

2. For each of the following topics, decide which type of organization might be most useful when arranging your notes: chronological, order of importance, spatial, cause and effect, problem/solution, compare and contrast. You might choose more than one type for a topic.
 - What led the American colonies to declare independence from Britain
 - The planets of our solar system
 - The polio epidemic of the 1950s, and how it was controlled

Follow a Format



Many teachers tell their students exactly how their papers should be formatted—for example, how wide the margins should be, where and how the sources should be listed, and so on. If your teacher has specified a format, be sure you have a list of the rules she or he has established—and follow them! If not, you need to decide on questions of format for yourself. Here are the main questions to consider:

- Should your report be written by hand or typed in a word processing program?
- If you are handwriting, should you write on every line or every other line?
- If you are handwriting, should you use both sides or only one side of the paper?
- If you are typing, should you use single space or double space? For typing, double spacing is standard.
- If you are using a computer, what type style (font) and size should you use? (Twelve-point Times or Times New Roman is standard.)
- What size should the margins be? Margins of 1" or 1.25" on each side are standard.
- How long should your report be—how many pages or words?
- Should you include illustrations? Are illustrations optional?
- How should you position your heading (and should it include information other than name, class, and date)?
- Should you include a separate title page?
- Should your bibliography (a list of your sources) appear on a separate page at the end of your report? That is standard.