

### Forming a topic-

-Frame your paper around (and directly state in the text) a question or problem *specific to biogeography*, as opposed to just providing general knowledge on a broad topic.

-Keep in mind that ideas in biogeography are constantly being re-evaluated with new methods and research. How have the ideas about your topic recently been questioned or strengthened by new research?

-Put some thought into how you are going to take notes and keep track of the sources you read at the beginning of your writing process (see *Citations* below)

### Searching the literature-

-To find a key paper to help start your search, go to **Web of Knowledge** (UW homepages>libraries>E-Resource Gateway>W>Web of Knowledge). Enter a keyword, author, or find the entry for a paper you've already found. Click on the title and see on the next page that you can access links to both "Times Cited" and "References". Times Cited looks forward in time to publications that used this paper and References looks back in time to the ideas that helped build the paper, visualized nicely on the Citation Map. Together, all these publications form a web and it will be your job to follow the development of ideas and create a cohesive thesis and argument. It may be difficult to figure out what publications are relevant or reputable- ask your instructors or librarians for help!

-Read the abstract first to determine if the paper is worth investing your time to read in depth.

-Keep in mind you don't have to read every part of every original research paper! In some cases the materials/methods and results may be hard to understand and beyond the scope of your work. Stick to the introduction and discussion/conclusions sections to get the basics of their arguments.

-Be sure you are citing both older/more "historic" papers or books AND current research findings submitted in journals. Know the difference between primary and secondary sources and avoid over-reliance on websites. If you find a website you like, try tracing the material back to its original print sources for citations.

-If appropriate, use key plant groups as case studies. Be sure you capitalize family and genus names and italicize or underline species and genus names in your text! (e.g. Portulacaceae, *Portulaca*, *Claytonia virginica*)

### Paper format-

-Break your paper up into discrete sections with headings. This will help us see the flow of ideas and conclusions.

-Use tables, figures and graphs to highlight your point (properly cited, of course). These can be embedded, but may be better placed at the end of the paper and properly referred to by number (e.g. Figure 1) in the text.

### Citations-

-You may want to store the bibliographic information of papers and books you find in a program like **EndNote** or **RefWorks**, both free through the library. You can also set up these databases to automatically enter your references as you type (like **Write-N-Cite**).

-Format the bibliography and embedded citations as per the **American Journal of Botany** (check [amjbot.com](http://amjbot.com) for recent issues, or the print version in the Biology Library)

- Generally in scientific writing, embedded direct quotes are only used if the person cited is particularly historic or famous, or the phrasing of the quote is particularly meaningful/elegant. Instead, learn how to paraphrase and properly cite the original author. Check the **UW Writing Center** website for examples and a discussion of how to avoid plagiarism.