Note Taking and Paraphrasing

While you may be tempted to simply print out material and highlight it, taking notes as you do your research will help you move more quickly through the creation of your project or paper when you are ready to put it together. You'll know your material better and you will have already put ideas and information into your own words. And if you paraphrase as you take notes, you will already have much of the work done, regardless of the format you choose.

You can take notes online or by hand. Each method has its own advantages, but regardless of which method you use, keep the following steps in mind:

1. Read the article or book excerpt carefully, and maybe more than once, until you understand what it says.
2. As soon as you determine you want to include this material in your research, write or cut and paste citation information onto your note sheet or card.
3. Then, decide if you want to SUMMARIZE, PARAPHRASE, or QUOTE.
4. If you want to summarize, you'll be taking everything you've read and condensing it down to its main points.
5. If you want to paraphrase, you'll want to do so carefully. After you've read the article and recorded citation information, look at how the author writes about the point you want to include in your notes. Read it, think about it, and then completely look away from it and put what you've read in your own words. Changing a few words around or substituting a couple of words for others IS NOT paraphrasing. It's plagiarizing. After you've written your paraphrased version, check with the original document to make sure you've got your information correct and that you didn't somehow get too close to its wording. Make sure that dates are accurate and names are spelled correctly. When you write your paper or text for website, etc, make sure to include an internal citation for any paraphrased material.
6. Sometimes you will want to quote a source. You can find no better or more succinct way to make a point. Make sure you lead into the quote and identify who said it or where it comes from and make sure to include an internal citation after it.