

Research Paper Assignment

What It Is:

Research is the act of gathering information about a topic. In setting out on a research project, your purpose should not be merely to find enough material to satisfy your instructor that you have used the library and know how to find sources. The primary reason for research is to learn enough about the subject to speak about it knowledgeably. Research is necessary if you are to know what you are writing about.

Through this project you will not only discover new information and examine various ideas, you will write a fully developed argumentative essay. A good research paper is not simply a series of paraphrases, citations, and quotations. You need to formulate your own thesis by establishing a position on the subject, think through questions, provide evidence to support your assertion, and present a thoughtful conclusion. A good research paper is not just a bunch of paraphrasing and citations but embodies the results of your own thinking.

Part One: Choose, then Narrow your Subject Area

Choose a general topic from the list of those provided with the assignment/rubric for the research paper. After you have chosen a general topic, you must narrow the focus of your paper. You will have to do some reading create an appropriate research focus. Make sure your focus area isn't too broad, too technical, too ambitious or too dull. See handout for focused research ideas.

DUE: Specific Research Subject and initial Thesis Statement= 10 pts.

Part Two: Compile a Draft of Works Cited

Now you need to begin collecting a list of publications relevant to your research topic. You must collect 7-10 sources and create a works cited page; you may have used the term "working bibliography" in past research assignments. You must use one book from the library in your working bibliography. Please also consider the validity of your sources. When using secondary sources you must know the reputation and reliability of the author. Look with a critical eye over all secondary material. Please use MLA format to create your Works Cited Page (see the OWL Purdue Writing Lab website for specifics on creating a Works Cited Page).

DUE: Works Cited Draft = 10 pts

Part Three: Take Accurate and Effective Notes

After you have created a working bibliography, located some of the sources you wish to use, and DONE SOME PRELIMINARY READING, you are ready to begin collecting specific material for your paper.

- As you take notes, consider what subtopics are forming. This will help organize your paper in the next step.
- You may take notes from your sources by paraphrasing, by quoting, or a combination. Make sure to make careful notation on the card as to where the information came from.
- Place quotations around all work that is copied verbatim.
- All notes should include the source and page number to help you organize your thoughts and avoid plagiarism later.
- All students must turn in a minimum of 15-20 note citations. (written cards, Google doc, or other)

Due: Notes/Note Cards= 10 pts

Part Four: Produce an Outline and Submit (revised) Thesis

Because a research paper is usually longer and more complex than ordinary papers, a good outline is a great help to organize, expand, and delete materials. You are required to complete a topic outline for your research paper. Please follow the directions below.

1. Number the main topics with Roman numerals, the first subheadings with capital letters, and the next with numbers. If further subheadings are necessary, use a,b, c and (1), (2), (3).
2. Write down topics, not sentences.
3. Check to see that your outline covers the subject fully.
4. Arrange your topics and sub-topics in logical, meaningful order

Example of Topic Outline for paper "Conduct and the Inner Self"

Conduct and the Inner Self

- I. Gaylin's essay as corrective to some current thinking
 - a. Nature of faulty thinking about individual responsibility
 - b. How study of "inner man" contributes to faulty thinking
- II. Gaylin's argument against the reality of the "inner man"
 - a. Purpose of the argument
 - b. Argument from historical perspective
- III. Problems with Gaylin's presentation
 - a. Exaggeration
 - i. Praise of a hypocrite
 - ii. Total denial of the good-heart principle
 - b. Contraction
- IV. Validity of Gaylin's argument despite flaws

DUE: Outline with Thesis Statement=15 points

Part Five: Write Your Paper (please see rubric for specific requirements).

- Paper must be written in MLA format.
- Using other's words and ideas as if they are your own is called plagiarism. Avoid it by giving full references to sources. Students who plagiarize will be given a zero.
- All direct quotations must be put in quotation marks and acknowledged with parenthetical references (author, page number) (title, page number).
- Paraphrasing should also be documented.

Due: Final Paper=50 pts