

Neshaminy High School

Research Paper Guide

English Department



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Purpose

A research paper generally consists of information and conclusions based on material already written, researched, and studied. Although original ideas and insights are required in a research paper as a writer draws conclusions, most information will be cited or paraphrased from previous research and writing. Research papers use a common set of procedures, rely on a variety of sources, contain documentation, and usually have a relatively narrow focus. The following outline should be considered basic when writing a research paper:

1. Select a general topic;
2. Narrow the topic after reviewing information available;
3. Develop a thesis, hypothesis, or formal question;
4. Conduct research and take notes. Sources may include books, videos, newspapers, magazines, interviews, films, Internet, etc.
5. Reconsider your thesis, hypothesis or question based on your findings;
6. Develop an outline and organize your notes accordingly (varies according to instructor);
7. Write a first draft of your research paper;
8. Revise and edit accordingly;
9. Provide documentation through parenthetical notation and a Works Cited page.
10. Include all information requested in your assignment: header, self-created title, thesis, topic sentences, parenthetical notation, Works Cited page, and other such requirements;
11. Use Times New Roman font and type 12;
12. Proofread the final draft.

The overall purpose of the research paper is to present the facts of an issue and draw conclusions. In addition, students must acknowledge the opposing view; however, afterwards the opposing argument must be weakened or discredited. To persuade the reader, the writer must bring the reader back to the paper's original stance.

Plagiarism¹

Plagiarism is literary theft. **It is using someone else's words or ideas—whether from a print source or off the Internet—as if they were your own.** Buying or borrowing another person's paper and submitting it as your own is also considered plagiarism, as is paraphrasing another person's work (putting it into your own words) without giving that person proper credit.

Because it is considered such a **serious offense**, most colleges and universities have policies severely penalizing students who plagiarize. Some policies call for **automatic failure** in the class involved, and some even call for **expulsion**. With such severe ramifications possible, it is best to learn from the outset to avoid the offense.

In order to avoid plagiarism, proper credit must be given to the sources used in the body of the paper. The process of crediting sources is called **documentation**. The Works Cited page and parenthetical notation are the proper way to document sources and avoid plagiarism.

WARNING: If a student is found to have plagiarized his or her paper, he or she will receive a ZERO for the writing portion of the assignment or for the entire assignment depending on the instructor. This may guarantee failure for the marking period. Also, disciplinary action may be taken which could cause the expulsion of the student from extra-curricular activities and offices. National Honor Society members and officers of any school activity found cheating may be faced with removal from office and the society.

1. Adapted from *The Research Paper: A Contemporary Approach* by Sharon Sorenson.

Writing a Thesis Statement¹

A thesis statement is a sentence that expresses the main ideas of the paper and answers the question or questions posed by the prompt. It establishes what the paper will discuss, develop, support, or argue. The thesis statement clearly reflects the purpose of the paper which is driven by the prompt/paper requirements.

Below are guidelines for the development of a thesis statement:

1. A thesis statement generally consists of two parts: topic and analysis, explanation, or assertion that is being made about the topic. The specifics of the thesis statement will depend on the focus of the research paper.
2. A thesis statement is a very **specific** statement—it should cover only what is required by the academic prompt and reflect the purpose of the paper.
3. A thesis can be considered as a map or a guide for both the writer and reader; therefore, it might be helpful to create an outline to see the connection between the thesis and the topic sentences of the paragraphs.
4. As writers edit and revise their papers, it is acceptable to change a written thesis statement—sometimes writers do not discover what they really want to say about a topic until they have started writing. Overall, a final thesis statement should accurately show what will be developed in the paper.

1. *Adapted from Purdue Online Writing Lab*

General Rules for Note Cards¹

1. *Identify the source.* On every note card identify the source from which the note comes. Write the book, magazine, article title, etc., in the upper right corner of every note card to identify the source.
2. *Identify the page number.* On every note card identify the page number from which the note comes from if provided by the original source.
3. *Identify the topic.* On every note card identify the topic using only a word or two. This will minimize rereading the entire note card later to decide its placement.
4. *Take adequate notes.* It is better to have too many notes than too few.
5. *Think before you write.* Before taking a note, ask three questions:
 - How will this information support the thesis?
 - What is this material really saying?
 - How can this information be used ?
6. *Add notes.* As information is collected on the note cards, the writer may want to make parenthetical notes about the content: “information contradicts opposition,” “may need more support,” or “use for final argument.”

1. Adapted from *The Research Paper: A Contemporary Approach* by Sharon Sorenson.

General Requirements

Some instructors may add to this list.

1. A running header should be in the top right corner indicating student's last name and page number and appear on every page. Steps to follow for header are the following: (1) double click top margin (2) select page # (3) select *Top of Page Plain Number 3* (4) type in last name (5) close by clicking red box

In addition, first page (left aligned) should have student's name, teacher's name, course, and date (this does not appear on every page).

Kline 1

Samantha Kline

Mr. Baron

Honors English Nine

20 January 2018

Social Immobility

2. Self-created title is centered
3. Entire document is **double-spaced**
4. Underline thesis statement and topic sentences if requested by teacher
4. Develop a clear introductory paragraph, supporting paragraphs, and a strong concluding paragraph. A persuasive paper must devote at least one paragraph to address the opposing point of view, if it is not woven throughout the paper.
6. Parenthetical notation according to MLA
7. Works Cited page according to MLA.
8. Must be typed in Times New Roman size 12 font.

The Writing Process

- I. **The Introduction** Opening paragraph (including hook and thesis) should gain the reader's attention and identify the focus of the paper. Suggestions listed below will facilitate the writing process.
- A. Summarize subject very briefly. Include the title, author, and the type of work
This can be done with a what-and-how statement.
EX: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is one of the most well-known novels of the Romantic Era. The story is one that has seeped into popular imagination...
- B. Start with a quotation from a source and then comment on its importance (always think in terms the thesis).
EX: Ernest Hemingway stated, "All modern literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*...all American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing good since."
- C. Begin with an explanation of the author's purpose and comment on how well he or she achieves this purpose.
EX: According to Hawthorne's analysis of the plays of William Shakespeare...
- D. Open with a few general statements about life that relate to the focus of the thesis.
EX: Chaos often rules on the fringes of society.
- E. Begin with a general statement about the topic being analyzed. Then discuss the subject within this context.
EX: The best science fiction always seems believable and logical within the context of the story line. This is certainly true...

****NOTE: USE ONLY ONE OF THE ABOVE OPENINGS****

Regardless of the opening employed, the introductory paragraph should include the following elements:

1. A thesis statement that establishes the purpose of the paper,
2. A brief summary of the work or topic in two to four sentences,
3. Background information or definition of terms that relate directly to the thesis (if necessary),
4. Any broad, comprehensive quotations or paraphrases that help to establish the thesis, and
5. Biographical facts about the author that relate to specific and pertinent issues (literary analysis only).

II. **The Body** The thesis should serve as a unifying force for the elements of your topic. The body should develop support for the thesis. Follow the steps below to facilitate addressing the main points.

- A. State each main point in a topic sentence so that it clearly relates to the thesis;
- B. Support each main point with specific details or direct quotations from the text that is being analyzed. *NOTE:* In general, each body paragraph should have a minimum of one critical and one textual citation;
- C. Explain how each of these specific details helps to prove your point. *NOTE:* Try to organize your writing so that each new paragraph deals with a separate main point;
- D. The manner in which the body is organized of your paper will be entirely dependent on your thesis and the critical approach used in your analysis. Possible essay organizations include the following essays: persuasion, comparison, classification, definition, cause and effect, and evaluation.

III. **The Conclusion**

In the last paragraph, tie all of the important points together and make a final statement about the main focus of the analysis. Give readers something to contemplate long after they have put the paper down.

The conclusion satisfies the curiosity piqued by the introduction. Most often the conclusion restates the thesis (vary wording). After restating the thesis, writers often branch out with more general statements about the thesis. A writer may want to include one of these common techniques in your conclusion: a quotation, a vivid image, a call for action, a warning.

If the introduction began with a striking image or a quotation, the writer may wish to echo or expand it. If the paper began by stating a problem, the conclusion may propose a solution or predict consequences. In short, leave the reader with an idea to consider further, even after the essay has concluded.

*Please note this was taken from the Purdue Online Writing Lab. Ctrl+click to access on a web browser: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/12/>

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A Works Cited Page credits sources that were cited in the paper through parenthetical notation.

1. Author information should appear at the beginning of the entry, with the author's last name first. If the source has two or more authors, reverse only the first author's name. If no author is listed, list the editor. If no editor is listed, begin with the title.
2. Title information follows any author information and lists the title of the article, essay, or other part of the book first, if needed, then the title of the book.
3. Publication information follows the author and the title and, as needed, lists the editor's name, edition number, volume number, and series name. Always list the place of publication, publisher's name and publication date.
4. Arrange entries in alphabetical order according to author's last name. If no author is given, alphabetize the entry by title, disregarding the words *A*, *AN*, or *THE* at the beginning of the title.
5. If an entry runs more than one line, indent the next line 5 spaces. Be sure every line is double spaced throughout the page.
6. Book and magazine titles should be in **italics**. Article titles should be enclosed in quotation marks.
7. No more URLs. While website entries will still include authors, article names, and websites names, when available, MLA no longer requires URLs. *Writers are, however, encouraged to provide a URL if the citation information does not lead readers to easily find the source.*
8. Publication Medium. Every entry receives a medium of publication marker. Most entries will be listed as Print or Web, but other possibilities include Performance, DVD, or T.V. Most of these markers will appear at the end of the entries: however, markers for Web sources are followed by the date of access.
9. New Abbreviations.
 - Many web source entries now require a publisher name, a date of publication, and/or page numbers.
 - When no publisher name appears on the website, write N.p. for no publisher given.
 - When sites omit a date of publication, write n.d. for no date.
 - For online journals that appear only online (no print version) or on databases that do not provide pagination, write n. pag. For no pagination.
 - No more underlining. MLA now recommends italicizing titles of independently published works (books, periodicals, films, etc.).

Parenthetical Notation: Follow the general rules below for referencing all sources, including websites: author, text, and page numbers.

Periods belong on the outside of parenthetical notation.

Parenthetical notation gives credit to the original author for material the writer is using to support thesis and purpose of paper.

1. **AUTHOR’S NAME IS NOT MENTIONED IN THE QUOTATION OR LEAD IN:** Use the name and page number in parenthesis.

“The statistics prove that gun control does not deter crime in Chicago” (Brown 3).

2. **AUTHOR’S NAME MENTIONED IN THE QUOTATION OR PARAPHRASED TEXT:** Do not use quotation marks when paraphrasing. When the author is identified in the writer’s sentence, only the page number is provided in the parenthesis.

Dr. Brown has proven that gun control does not deter crime in Chicago (3).

3. **ARTICLE WITH NO AUTHOR:** Give the title and page number of the article.

“They have proven that gun control deters violence”(“Guns Can Deter” 3).

- 4 **MULTIPLE AUTHORS:** List all authors according to the original source.

“Tighter gun control in the United states erodes the Second Amendment rights”
(Moore, Smith, and Yang 76).

5. **AUTHOR WITH NO PAGE NUMBER:** Articles accessed online may or may not have page numbers.

“We see so many global warming hotspots in North America” (Johnson).