

What Is A Research Paper?

“A research paper is the culmination and final product of an involved process of research, critical thinking, source evaluation, organization, and composition...A research paper is not simply an informed summary of a topic by means of primary and secondary sources. It is neither a book report nor an opinion piece nor an expository essay consisting solely of one’s interpretation of a text nor an overview of a particular topic. Instead, it is a genre that requires one to spend time investigating and evaluating sources with the intent to offer interpretations of the texts, and not unconscious regurgitations of those sources. The goal of a research paper is not to inform the reader what others have to say about a topic, but to draw on what others have to say about a topic and engage the sources in order to thoughtfully offer a unique perspective on the issue at hand. This is accomplished through two major types of research papers” (“Genre and the Research Paper”).

” Good research is cautious about drawing conclusions, careful to identify uncertainties and avoids exaggerated claims. It demands multiple types of evidence to prove a point. It does not assume that association (things occur together) proves causation (one thing causes another). Bad research often contains jumps in logic, spurious arguments, and non-sequiturs (“it does not follow”)... Good research may use *anecdotal evidence* (examples selected to illustrate a concept), but does not rely on them to draw conclusions, because examples can be found that prove almost anything. More statistically-valid analysis is usually needed for reliable proof” (Litman).

MLA Formatting

Paper Format

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper,
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use a legible font like Times Roman. The font size should be 12 pt.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks (unless otherwise instructed by your instructor).
- Set the margins of your document to **1 inch on all sides**. Indent the first line of a paragraph one half-inch (five spaces or press tab once) from the left margin.
- Create a header that numbers all pages consecutively in **the upper right-hand corner**, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Use either italics throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis. **CHANGE: No more underlining major works – only italicize!**
- Do not make a title page for your paper unless specifically requested.

- In the upper **left-hand corner of the first page**, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Again, be sure to use double-spaced text.
- Double space again and center the title. Don't underline your title or put it in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case, not in all capital letters.

Paraphetical Citations

- Immediately following a quotation from a source or a paraphrase of a source's ideas, you place the author's name followed by a space and the relevant page number(s). **
Paraphetical citations can vary depending on what information is included in the introduction of the quote.

Human beings have been described as "symbol-using animals" (Burke 3).

When a source has no known author, use a shortened title of the work instead of an author name. Place the title in quotation marks if it's a short work, or italicize it if it's a longer work.

- To indicate short quotations (fewer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks. Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text, and include a complete reference on the Works Cited page. Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear **after** the paraphetical citation.
- Question marks and exclamation points should appear **within** the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the paraphetical citation if they are a part of your text.
- For quotations that are four or more lines of verse or prose: place quotations in a **free-standing block** of text and **omit quotation marks**. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented one inch from the left margin; **maintain double-spacing**. Only indent the first line of the quotation by a half inch if you are citing multiple paragraphs. Your paraphetical citation should come **after** the closing punctuation mark.

Works Cited

- **No More URLs!** While website entries will still include authors, article names, and website 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.
- **Continuous Pagination? Who Cares?** You no longer have to worry about whether scholarly publications employ continuous pagination or not. For all such entries, both volume and issue numbers are required, regardless of pagination.

- **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 TV. Most of these markers will appear at the end of entries; however, markers for Web sources are followed by the date of access.
- **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.

Notes on Rough Drafts

****Quotes should be analytical or critical, statistics or study, FACTS, or scholarly research on your topic. Quotes should prove some aspect of your thesis. Research quotes are NOT personal stories or someone's opinions. You should NOT just have quotes that define – rather have quotes that analyze some aspect of your topic. Do NOT use quotes for random information just to say you have used quotes. If your quote is not necessary to PROVE some aspect of your thesis, it is unnecessary.****

1. No first or second person.
2. Do NOT talk to the reader or advise the reader. You are presenting factual information, NOT lecturing the reader on how to act.
3. Organize the research paper based the thesis statement.
4. The thesis statement is the last sentence in the introduction
5. Direct quotes should have quotation marks.
6. Quotes are followed by a parenthetical citation.
7. Quotes should be sandwiched – with an introduction explaining where the quote is from and/or who stated the quote AND an explanation of how that quote proves the thesis statement.
8. Do NOT string quotes together, one after another. There should be explanations between quotes. You should give details and examples from the quotes.
9. Have paragraphs.
10. Paragraphs should start with a topic sentence, not a quote. Topic sentences should directly derive from the thesis statement.
11. Parenthetical citations should be on the works cited and works cited entries should be in parenthetical citations.

12. Use hard research – statistics, numbers, PROOF of statements. Where are the surveys, polls, analysis – hard research means numbers.

Important Links:

www.owl.english.purdue.edu

www.ncwiseowl.org

www.dosomething.org

www.blurb.com

<http://www.vtqi.org/resqual.pdf>

Free Electronic Journals:

- <http://www.doaj.org/>
- <http://www.pulibrary.edu.pk/resources/fsj.htm>
- <http://info.lib.uh.edu/wj/webjour.html>
- <http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/hardin/journals.html#free>

Works Cited:

“Genre and the Research Paper.” The Owl at Purdue. 2009. <24 Sept 2009.> Web.

Litman, Todd. ” Evaluating Research Quality: Guidelines for Scholarship.” Victoria Transport Policy Institute. 4 Sept. 2009. <24 Sept. 2009.> Web.