

Writers' Workshop

The Research Paper

Research is something you do all the time, but you may not realize it. When you're curious about a song you heard on the radio, you find out the name of the band. You can ask a friend, call the radio station, go to a music store or look on the Internet (of course, this is what you actually do), but all of these are types of research.

A research paper is simply a paper that puts together, in a logical format, all of the research you have compiled on any given topic. These can be insanely dull and difficult to write, but only if you select a topic that is insanely dull to you. In other words, if you are interested in something, it will (logically) interest you!!

Research papers can do two things: share information or prove a point (they can be expository or persuasive). You will be writing a persuasive paper. We will be spending a lot of time on this paper to slowly work through the process, so no due dates are posted. As each piece of the process is due, I will post that on the website, and each stage of the process is worth points.

Elements of Persuasion:

In order to persuade your reader, you will need to use the elements of rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos, but first, you need to learn about these terms. Please watch the short video on my website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf81d0YS58E>

Topic Selection:

The topic you select must interest you (you will be writing about this for several weeks). There are only three limits:

1. It must be persuasive; that means you must have a thesis and prove it.
2. You may not select a topic that you already know a lot about, as I want you to actually have to research something.
3. Does it pass the grandma test? Is this something you could talk to your (or my) grandmother about?

You may already have a fantastic topic in hand, but just in case you don't, I'm putting a list of possible ideas on my website. You may select from this list, or you may decide to write on something else. I need to approve all topics. Submitting your topic on time *is worth points*.

Brainstorming (“thought-showering”?)”

This is a writing class, so you will be following the writing process. Once you have selected your topic, you will need to brainstorm. Your brainstorm can come in the form of

freewriting, listing, Venn diagram, bubble map, etc. This is an actual step that *will be worth points*.

Research:

Once you have your topic and have brainstormed some, it's time to start researching. You will actually be researching both sides of the question, and you need to take notes on both sides of the question. This will educate you concerning your topic so you can make an informed decision regarding your paper. It is VERY, VERY important that you keep track of all of your sources (every site that you visit and take notes from) and the date when you visited the sites. You will need these for your works cited page (we'll cover that later). We will also cover how to take notes while researching. You will need to have access to all your work at all time, so Google.docs is the way to go. I will be reviewing your notes, *so this too is worth points*.

Thesis:

As you research your topic, you will be analyzing which side of the issue you support, so you will be formulating your thesis through the research portion of the process. Your thesis should be one sentence that clearly delineates what your topic is and which side you support. For example, if your topic is whether or not organized sports belong in high school, will you support that or refute it? *This will be worth points*.

Outline:

After you have gathered some information and decided on your focus, it's time to create an outline. This is a formal outline, typed, with headings and subheadings similar to what you did as a previous homework assignment. It is not something that you put together a few minutes before class; it is a road map for your entire paper. Each of your subheadings will be a point that supports your stance, and within each of those subheadings you should list the sources you have that support your stance. The more developed the outline, the easier it is to write the paper. *This will be worth points*.

Paragraph Drafts:

After your outline is approved, you can begin putting your writing and research together. We will be dividing the drafting process up into paragraphs. Excluding your introduction and conclusion, each paragraph will focus on one of your argument points and should contain the following:

- A topic sentence
- Examples to support your assertion
- At least one outside source that supports your assertion (either a quotation or a reference to an outside source)

You will be handing these in separately as you move through the writing process, and *each one will be worth points*.

Putting Together the Draft:

After you have completed the research and drafting components, you can begin putting your draft together. That means that in addition to the argument paragraphs you have already generated, you will have to generate an introduction (with hook), transitions between your paragraphs, and a conclusion. Your paper will need to have the following elements:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion
- Works cited page
- Works consulted page (if applicable)

You already know what the introduction, body and conclusion are. We will go over in class what the works cited page is, what it does, and how it should look. *Each of these sections will be worth points (some more than others).*

Revising:

We will have a rough draft workshop, so plan on bringing copies of your draft with you to class that day (typed). *This too will be worth points.*

We will spend a lot of time learning about citations. If you EVER have any questions regarding MLA formatting, citations, etc., please go to the following website for all your answers. Not only is the website thorough, but it is consistently updated. **You should have it bookmarked on your computer.**

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Look to the left under “Search the Owl” and click on “Research and Citation.” From there you can select MLA, which is what we will use in class. Everything you need to know for an English class research paper appears here.