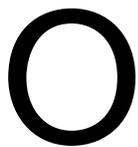# *Writing the Perfect Research Paper*

O kay, so your paper is due much too soon, and although you have the handout explaining the assignment and the teacher's requirements, you're a little stumped as to how to proceed. NO NEED TO PANIC! This guide will take you step-by-step through the process of writing a research paper. [1]

Table of Contents:

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[1] This document was adapted and revised from the "Panic-Free Guide to Writing Your CHS Research Paper" with permission from Ms. Beth Opel, English Department Chair at Carroll High School, Fort Wayne, IN. www.nacs.k12.in.us/resources/research/CHSresearchpaperhelp.html.

[2] SAFE's English Department uses the MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style. If your teacher requires another format, make sure to follow his or her instructions to the letter! If he/she doesn't specify a certain format or style, MLA is the most universally accepted way to construct a research paper.

What Is a Research Paper?

In art class, your teacher asks you to write a paper on the paintings of Vincent van Gough. Your biology teacher asks you to report on the migration patterns of the monarch butterflies. In your 9th grade English class, your teacher asks, "Are you ready for a road trip?" then assigns a report on a state destination, including national parks, historical landmarks, land features, and famous people from that state. In each of these assignments, while you may know something about the subject, you do not know enough to write a fully developed composition.

A research report is a composition based upon material from outside research rather than your own knowledge and experience. When you prepare a report, your main goals are to gather material from a _variety_ of sources and to present your information clearly and accurately while _giving credit_ to your sources.

As you write a research report, you go through the same steps you would with any other composition – prewriting, drafting, and revising. These stages help you organize and present the facts and ideas you have collected. Keep in mind, however, that a research report is more than simply a recounting of facts and ideas. You must select the facts and ideas that are most important to your assigned topic, and you must also decide on the best way to organize your information. Even in the planning stages, you shape your report by a number of judgments you make. As you plan your report, you choose a subject, limit your topic, prepare research questions, determine your purpose, and identify your audience.

It is important, however, that you make it clear to your readers when you are using information from other sources. If you quote a source, not only must you put those words in quotation marks, but you must cite that source. If you paraphrase—put the author's idea into your own words—you must cite the source as well. If you don't, that's the same as stealing that information. However, in the case of written ideas it's called **plagiarism**, and it can cost you your grade and in some cases your credit for the class.

But the purpose for this guide is to teach you how to avoid even accidental (unintentional) plagiarism through a careful step-by-step process that will also help you to create a well-written, organized research paper.

Choosing Your Topic

Making a good topic choice can often mean the difference between a relatively stress-free paper and a huge headache. Some teachers will give you very specific instructions regarding the topic of your paper, while others will leave it more open.

If your **teacher has given you a topic**, generally it is not a good idea to try to get cute and creative and alter the guidelines he or she has given you. Teachers look for you to **follow their directions** pretty closely.

On the other hand, if your **teacher has allowed you some freedom** of choice, you need to make sure that your topic is **not too broad**. Many students are tempted to choose a really unfocused subject because they mistakenly think that their research will then have much more to offer. Unfortunately, what happens instead is that the student becomes really overwhelmed and may not make very good source selections when consulting the mountain of information that is available. Also, the paper itself will not be very interesting. This means that both you and your teacher will become bored with it, which could negatively affect the grade.

Once you have a **general idea** of the subject matter you'd like to explore, see if you can **break it down** to **one aspect** of your original idea. If you can't, you probably have a narrow enough topic. If you're not sure, go on to the **thesis statement**. Narrowing your topic down often goes hand-in-hand with formulating your thesis statement, and as you work to make your thesis effective, you will be automatically creating a focus for your paper.

The Thesis Statement

One of the earliest and most crucial steps in writing your paper is coming up with an effective thesis statement. Think of it as the whole paper in a nutshell. If you were going to tell someone the point of your paper in one sentence, that's your thesis. Your thesis will be the **last sentence** in the first paragraph, or introduction, of your paper, as well as at the beginning of your outline. **Every single sentence in your paper must have a connection to your thesis and somehow help you to prove your thesis.**

Your thesis is your way of telling your reader what your paper will try to demonstrate. The rest of your paper will then be devoted to supporting the statement you have made in your opening paragraph. When you type your paper, though, the thesis won't be identified--it won't be in bold print or made to stand out in any way. Although it will just be one of the sentences in your introduction (**usually the last sentence of your introductory paragraph**), it should be clear by how firm and definitive it is that this is the statement you intend to support. Let's look a little more closely at what a thesis should and should not be.

A thesis is NOT:

- a fact

- a series of ideas several sentences long

- a question

- a statement containing "no" or "not"

- a vague or indefinite idea

- a foregone conclusion (something everyone already knows)

A thesis IS:

- an opinion

- a narrow, limited, single idea capable of being fully developed in the paper

- an assertion or declaration capable of being proven

- a positive opinion

- a clearly stated, specific point of view

- a fresh look at an issue you are willing to defend as being important

Be sure that your thesis isn't so broad that hundreds of pages could be written about it. At the same time, it shouldn't be so narrow that you will have great difficulty coming up with enough information to support your statement. Check out these samples:

Not so good:
1. *Iowa is in the Midwest.*

2. *Did Edgar Allan Poe have a drug addiction?*

Better:
1. *Iowa's many natural and historical attractions make it an exciting place to visit.*
(Can you see that this is much more specific and provable? Your paper will talk about the different tourist attractions, such as parks, museums, and events.)

2. *Edgar Allan Poe's addiction to alcohol influenced the dark tone of his short story "The Masque of the Red Death."*
(Again, this is much more specific. Instead of having no idea where to begin, you now have narrowed your research to information dealing with the impact of his possible addiction on the writing of this one short story.)

You may have to do some research on your topic before you know what you want to zero in on as the focus of your paper.

- What is your topic area? What do you already know about your topic? Write a few ideas down.

- Now, do some research. What aspects of the topic interest you? Could any of them be developed into a provable thesis? Write down some potential areas of concentration that you could pursue.

- Okay, now see if you can choose one of those areas and come up with a good thesis statement for it.

  o Don't use "I" (as in "I think" or "in my opinion") or "you" (as in "Have you always wondered...?") because it weakens your sentence and because research papers should be written in **third person**.

  o Also, be very careful **not to refer to the process of writing** the paper in your thesis. A common mistake students make is stating their thesis with a big trumpet fanfare around it, like: "The thesis for my paper is.…" **WRONG!** Just **make your statement with confidence** as if it is a fact because you are going to **prove** that you are absolutely right!

Too Broad!

> The Revolutionary War was important to the independence of the United States.

Focused!

> The main reason for the Revolutionary War was the colonies' taxation without representation.
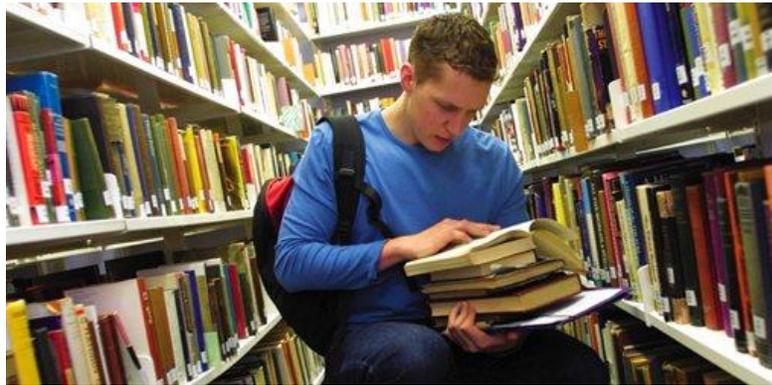
Focused!

> The colonists would not have won the Revolutionary War without their relationship with the French, which was forged and maintained by Benjamin Franklin.

Focused!

> A main factor in the start of the Revolutionary War was that colonists had begun to think of themselves as Americans rather than British subjects.

Starting Your Research

Now that your thesis statement has been perfected, it's time to really begin to research your topic. Don't forget--you are only looking for information that will help you to prove that thesis. So, if your thesis is about how the writing of Laura Ingalls Wilder was inspired by her reading of French philosophers (it wasn't, by the way), then it is completely irrelevant to talk about her childhood, where she was born, whom she married, etc. **Remember, background information is ONLY appropriate if it is necessary to help support your thesis.** In the Laura Ingalls Wilder topic, you would concentrate on looking for information that told about the influence of French philosophical writing on her work. Nothing else would be worth writing down if it didn't have anything to do with proving that thesis.

OK, so you are in the library. Where do you begin? Here are some places to look:

- **The computerized card catalog:** This source will tell you what books (and other materials) the library owns on a specific topic. You can search according to author, title, or subject. Some of these books contain a collection of essays, and one or more of the individual articles could have some helpful information for your research.

- **Encyclopedias:** Smith Academy has encyclopedias; these will give you limited assistance since they mostly contain general information that may not be specific enough for your thesis. These sources could be useful if your thesis has something to do with history, however. Before using the encyclopedias, make sure your teacher allows them as a source.

- **Interlibrary search system:** Each branch of the Allen County Public Library System is able to investigate whether other local branches have sources that could help you. You could go pick it up at the other branch OR go to the Allen County Public Library website and have it sent over to your local branch. The IPFW Helmke Library also has abundant materials as well as an intercollegiate library search. Students under the age of 18 must have a parent sign a permission card (available at the Helmke Library) in order to check out materials.

- **Specialized reference books:** Our library contains many reference books that deal with a variety of subject areas. Please consult your teachers for help—they are great resources and really know their stuff!

- **Bibliographies in books or articles:** When you find a source that is especially good, check to see if there is a list of sources that the writer of *that* book or essay consulted. Often, you will discover a host of wonderful titles to investigate. The interlibrary search system (see above) can then tell you where such sources may be available in our area.

- **Internet sources:** Be careful with these, as many are not written by an "expert" of any sort. Look for website addresses that end in "org," "gov," and occasionally "edu." These are authorized by non-profit, government, and academic institutions. Ask your teacher or a librarian if you're not sure whether the site is reliable. As you probably know, anyone can make a web page, so just because it's on the Internet doesn't mean the person knows what he or she is talking about! Take your time and sort through these sites to make sure the material is going to help you prove that thesis statement!

- **Subscription data bases:** Galenet, Inspire, Grollier, Culturegrams, Facts on File, Magill's, and SIRS are examples. These databases have already searched the internet for you, and all articles are reliable sources. While it may seem that surfing the web at home is easier; in reality, searching these databases will save you time.

Remember! If all else fails, ask your teacher for help! He/She is there to assist you, are experts at finding information, and are ultimately your <u>best</u> search engine!

Creating Source Cards

As you locate sources, you will find that some offer tremendous information, while others have little that is applicable or understandable. Not all sources are equally valuable or reliable. **Remember to follow your teacher's instructions as to the number and types of sources you need to consult.** A good rule of thumb is to have **at least three** sources of **varying types**. Utilizing only Internet sources would not be appropriate for most assignments. Judge each source carefully before deciding if it would be useful. For all sources you consult, you should create a bibliography (or source) card following the examples shown below. (The explanations on the right are color-coded to the information on the cards and are in the order that they should be listed on your source cards.)

Example #1: Reference or Encyclopedia Article:

1
Toms, Richard. "Thurber, James." <u>World Book Encyclopedia</u>. 2014.
347.24   SAFE

Your first source
Author, last name first (if listed; check end of article)
Title of article (in quotation marks)
Name of reference book (underline)
Copyright date (on back of title page)
Call number of book and where you got it

Example #2: Essay from a Collection:

2
Darst, Anne. "Young, Gifted, Black--and Inspired." <u>Black Theater</u>. Ed. Lindsay Patterson. New York, NY: Dodd, 2001. 221-76.
639.2K   ACPL

Your second source
Author, last name first (of article)
Title of essay or chapter (in quotation marks)
Title of book/collection (underline)
Editor of collection
Publishing city and company (found on title page)
Copyright date (on back of title page)
Pages of article
Call number of book and where you got it

Example #3: Magazine Article:

3
Edsall, Thomas Byrne. "London's 'To Build a Fire.'" <u>English Journal</u>. June 2015: 86-94.
ED502.33   IPFW

Your third source
Author, last name first (of article)
Title of article (in quotation marks)
Title of magazine (underline)
Date of magazine
Pages of article
Call number of book and where you got it

Example #4: Book:

4

Vare, Ethlie Ann, and Greg Patek. The Life of William Faulkner. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago Press, 2009.

342.7K   ACPL

Your fourth source
Author, last name first (note how to show two authors)
Title of book (underline)
Publishing city and company (found on title page)
Copyright date (on back of title page)
Call number of book and where you got it

Example #5: Internet Source:

5

Creamer, Kevin J.T. The Milton-L Home Page. 19 November 2010. University of Richmond. May 10, 2004.
<http://www.urich.edu/~creamer/Milton/>.

Your fifth source
Author of website, last name first (if known)
Name of website (usually found at top of first page)
Last date updated (often at end of site)
Institution that maintains the site and date you got it
Website address

Example #6: Periodical from Internet

6

Deitche, Joseph. "The Great Math Game." Phi Beta Kappan Spring 2014: N.P. Inspire. April 29, 2014
<http://www.inspire.net>.

Your sixth source
Author, last name first (of article) Title of article (in quotation marks) Title of magazine (underline)
Date of magazine Pages of article
Name of database and date you got it
Website address

Check with your teacher or consult the *MLA Handbook* for instructions on how to list other types of sources.

Taking Notes on Note Cards
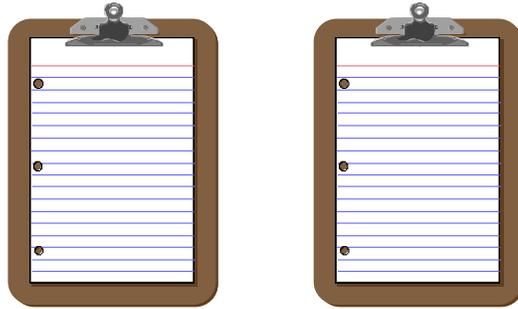
N ow that you have collected a variety of sources on your subject, you must begin skimming them for pertinent information. When you find something that will support your thesis, you will take notes, writing down the ideas on 3 x 5 note cards. These cards will hold **both** your *DIRECT QUOTES* (*information you copy word for word*—make sure to keep direct quotes to a minimum in your paper, only using them when it is **necessary** to use that exact wording) and *PARAPHRASING (information you learned from a source but put into your own words)*.

NOTE: It is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that you understand that "putting it into your own words" is more than changing a few words from the original source!!! Please realize that in order to avoid plagiarism (which usually means automatic failure to most teachers), you need to make sure that you use:

- **no *vocabulary* that you wouldn't normally use**

- **no passages of *more than three* consecutive words that are exactly the same as your source**

- **no *sentence or paragraph structure* (order) that mirrors the text of your original source**

> It is much more impressive for you to write it in **common, simple language** that **shows your teacher that you understand** what you are saying than to use big words or complicated sentences that make your teacher wonder if you even have the foggiest idea what you are talking about.
> **So, do not succumb to the temptation to copy things directly out of your sources!!!**

Now, when taking notes, keep these ideas in mind:

- Be sure to have a good **key word** at the top of each card. This will be vital when you begin outlining and/or organizing your paper.

- Make sure you have **several cards for each key word**, or that idea will not be useful for your paper because there will be too little information on that aspect of your topic.

- Limit each card to **one idea** to avoid confusion. (One idea doesn't necessarily mean one sentence, however.)

- Place the **author** and the **page number** at the bottom of the card. (When the author is not known, use the title instead.)

- Each note card should be **numbered with the source number** that is on the corresponding source card (to indicate from which source the information was taken).

Here are some examples:

Paraphrased Information from a Source with Numbered Pages:

first black female 2	
A Raisin in the Sun was the first major play by a black female playwright.	
(Darst 223)	

Key word (the main idea of the note)
Number of source (corresponds with source card)
Information (your words--no quotation marks) from source
Author and page of where info was found

Paraphrased Information from a Source with Unnumbered Pages:

based in reality 5	
Milton often based his characters on his real-life acquaintances.	
(Creamer)	

Key word (the main idea of the note)
Number of source (corresponds with source card)
Information (your words--no quotation marks) from source
Author (no page given in Internet source)

Direct Quote:

stream-of-consciousness 4	
"Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily' is one of the finest examples of Southern fiction in the stream-of-consciousness mode."	
(Vare and Patek 78)	

Key word (the main idea of the note)
Number of source (corresponds with source card)
Information (direct quote--see quotation marks) from source
Author(s) and page of where info was found

It's always a good idea to **have more note cards than you think you will need**. The more information you have, the less "stretching" you'll have to do in-between when you go to write your paper. Believe it or not, a research paper does not involve much imagination on your part. Your role is the compiler and interpreter of information, but the bulk of your paper will really be material that you found in your sources!

Once you've completed your research, it's time to organize it!

Writing the Outline

With good note cards, writing a good outline is a piece of cake! Your teacher may or may not require you to turn in an outline. Either way, an outline is a great way to get the whole paper organized. The outline is the road map for your paper. It shows what information you will present in what order. Just follow these simple steps:

First, place your cards in **groups according** to the subject you have noted with your **keyword.**   The more cards you have, the easier it will be to meet the length requirement your teacher has given without having to s-t-r-e-t-c-h. You may find that some of the cards don't fit anywhere and will not, therefore, be used.

Second, organize your subjects. Order them the way you intend to use them in your paper. Decide which pile/group will be covered first, etc. Some people advise working up to your best material last to leave the reader (teacher) with a good impression.

Third, organize the cards in each group in the **exact order** you plan to use them. Then put them all together, beginning with the first stack and combining them all into one big stack. It might be a good idea to write **A, B, C, and so on** to identify which card follows which in case you drop them and your ordering system is compromised.

PRESTO!   You are now ready to begin your outline.

There are generally two kinds of outlines—**phrase (topic) outlines** and **sentence outlines**. Just as you might guess, a phrase outline consists of each element being stated as a phrase or even a single word, whereas a sentence outline has a sentence for each topic, subtopic, and so on. Whichever one you choose (and your teacher might indicate a preference for one or the other), **BE CONSISTENT!** Don't combine some in phrases with some in sentences!

If your teacher assigns a phrase outline, the only sentence will be the thesis statement at the beginning. If your teacher assigns a sentence outline, there will be no fragments or run-ons.

Outlines should follow these guidelines, though how rigorously you adhere to the format depends on whether your teacher requires one or you are simply preparing the outline for your own use:

- Set the **spacing at 2 (double space)** and format the **page numbering** (top right) for your paper using the header/footer function. **Overall margins** should be set at **1 inch all around**. (Some formats ask you to single space the outline. Ask your teacher if he/she has a preference.)

  - In **Microsoft Word**, go to *Insert, Page Numbers.* Indicate the *Position* as *Top of Page (Header)* and the *Alignment* as *Right.* Then go to *View, Headers and Footers.* **Type in your name followed by a space next to the page number**, and it will automatically print it on every page. The outline will begin on page ii.

  - In **Microsoft Works**, go to *View, Headers and Footers.* Type in *&r* (to right align), your **last name**, and *&p* (to have page numbers print automatically).

  - If you are using **another word processing program**, check *Help* for how to format page numbers.

  - Whatever program you use, **page numbers should be top right**, in the format of your **last name followed by a space and the page number**. Take the time to figure out how to make your numbering come out correctly!

- **Center** your **title** beneath the heading. Don't use bold or underline or a special font.

- Next, place your **thesis statement** (left-aligned; word-for-word) below your title.

- Depending on what your teacher requires, when you begin your outline Roman numeral one will either be **Introduction** or the first main point of the body of your paper. (If Roman numeral one is the introduction, then the **last Roman numeral** in the outline, logically, will be your **conclusion**.)

The descending **parts of an outline** are normally **labeled** in the following order:

I.

    A.

    B.

        1.

        2.

            a.
            b.

II.   ...and so on.

- As with any outline, if you have an **A you need a B**. If you have a 1 you need a 2--you get the idea.

- The **more detailed** and complete your **outline**, the **easier** the actual **writing** of the paper. (And we want it to be easier, don't we?)

- Use a consistent tab for your outline. **Line up the periods** so that all the Roman numerals are lined up vertically on your page, all the A, B, Cs are lined up, etc.

- If an outline is a mandatory element of your project, you'd better make absolutely sure that you **follow the order of your outline when writing your paper!** If not, your teacher may become suspicious that you copied all or part of the paper itself from a different source.
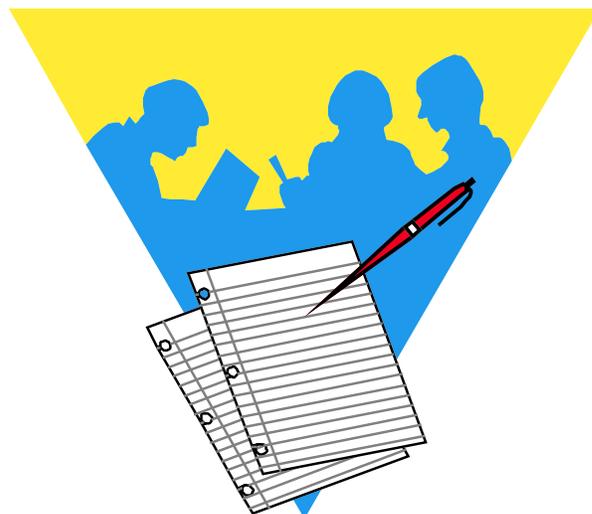
SAMPLE OUTLINE

(This is a phrase/topic outline):

Shakespeare's Corrupted Villain Richard III

Thesis Statement: Due to the influence of the House of Tudor, Shakespeare altered the facts of history by making King Richard a deformed villain in the history play *Richard III.*

I. Tudor history

    A. Used in their behalf

    B. Ruined Richard's reputation

    C. Influenced Shakespeare

        1. Influence on the people

        2. Influence today

II. Richard's deformity

    A. Physical

    B. Relation to evil

    C. Shakespeare's purpose

    D. Historical evidence

III. Richard's murders

    A. Edward

    B. The Duke of Clarence

    C. The two princes

Writing the Rough Draft

Wow! You're moving right along! This research paper stuff isn't so tough after all. You are all ready to begin the actual writing of your paper.

- The **first** thing you need to do is to write a **general introduction** for your paper. Remember, you should **follow your outline**, which means you will follow the order of information you determined when you organized your note cards. Based on your outline, begin with general comments that **introduce your topic**; **save the details** for the second paragraph and beyond.

- Your entire paper should be written in **third person**, so **don't use first-person pronouns (*I, me*) or second-person pronouns (*you*)** in the introduction or anywhere else in the paper.

- Don't forget—your **thesis statement** should be the last sentence **in your opening paragraph (introduction)**.

- After the introduction, **support** your thesis by **following** the order of your **outline** and the order of the **cards** that you arranged earlier. Remember, you need to constantly check yourself to be sure you are not including information that is irrelevant to helping you support your thesis. **Paragraphs** should be **at least four to five sentences**. Be careful, though, that your paragraphs aren't too long. Divide your ideas up (according to your outline or note card subtopics) and deal with **one main idea per paragraph**.

- **Use transitions** (*therefore, however, on the other hand, in addition*, etc.) to make your paper flow from paragraph to paragraph and idea to idea.

- When you are ready to type up your rough draft (and many of you will compose your paper at the computer), you need to begin the **first page** with a **heading** (see below).

SAMPLE FIRST PAGE FORMAT:

(your last name and page number) Rogers 1

(This heading only appears on the first page of text:)

Joe Rogers *(your name)*

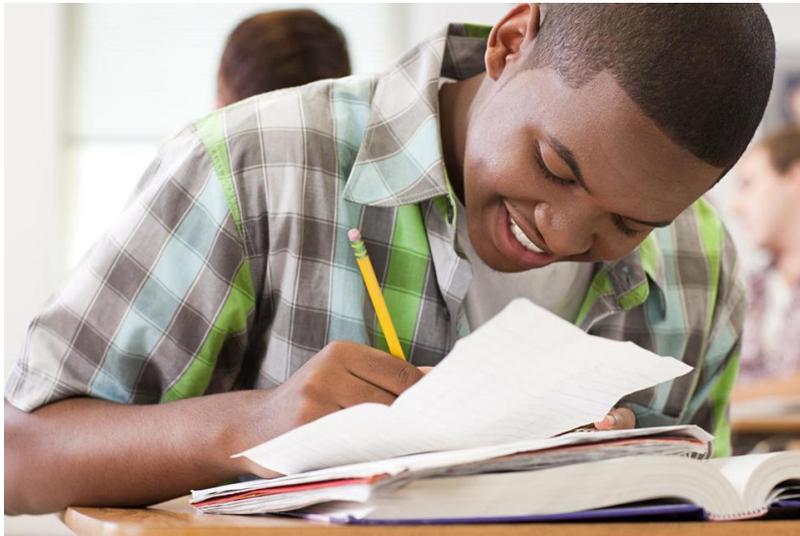Academic English 12, Period 1 *(full name of the class and period)*

Mr. Taylor *(your teacher's name)*

29 April 2016 *(date; note unusual format)*

(title of paper; centered)
Women Inventors and the Industrial Revolution

During the Industrial Revolution in America, . . . *(Begin your intro)*

AVOIDING PLAGIARIZING

x

Notice that the **first sentence** of the example is made up of **common knowledge**, so there are **no parentheses** after it. The **next sentence is a direct quote** copied **word for word** from a source; it is in **quotation marks**. The **last sentence is a paraphrase** of several lines of information from yet another source. Both the **paraphrased part and the direct quote**, since you likely didn't know those ideas before you began to work on your paper, are **followed by a citation containing the author and page** where the material was obtained.

Here are some other special situations you might run into:

Short Quotations:
If quotation runs **four or fewer typed lines**, work it into the body of the paper.

Long Quotations:
Quotations of **more than four typed lines** should be set off from the rest of the paper. **Indent each line ten spaces**. **No quotation marks are used** with longer quotations that are set off from the rest of the text of your paper.

Quoting Poetry:
Lines of a poem should be **worked into the text** of the paper. Use a **slash (/) to indicate the end of each line** of poetry. If it is more than four lines, see the format for long quotations (above).

Partial Quotations:
If you want to omit part of a quotation, **use an ellipsis (...) to indicate that you left part of it out**. Be sure that you don't change the quotation's meaning with your omission.

Adding Your Words:
If you need to add any **clarifying information**, put it **inside brackets ([...])** within the quotation.

Citing a Complete Work as a Whole:
No Need for Hunger recommends government assistance for nonprofit groups (Jones). **Page number is not needed**, since you are talking about the point of the whole work.)

Citing a Work with Two or Three Authors:

Students can learn twice as much if they eat breakfast on a regular basis (Smith and Jones 34).

(List the authors in **the order they appear on the title page**.)

Citing a Work with More Than Three Authors:

"Huck Finn is the early representation of the decline of Western civilization" (Jones et. al. 4).

(Use the **first author's name listed** on the title page. The Latin *et. al.* means, roughly, "among others." Notice also that this was a direct quote.)

Citing a Work with No Listed Author:

Langston Hughes traveled widely throughout Africa ("Hughes, Langston" 599).

(Use the **title** of the source.)

Citing Two or More Works by the Same Author:

The basic racial problems of South Africa rest in the education of the young (Paton, <u>Cry</u> 90).

(Use a **main word of the title** in addition to the author's name in your citation to differentiate from another source you have by the same author.)

Citing a Source Without Pages (Such as an Internet Source):

Milton's blindness ended up being a huge inspiration for his writing (Creamer).

(Just use the **author**. **If no author** is given, **use the title** of the website or source.)

GREAT! You're getting nearer to the end!

f you finish with the rough draft, and you've used all your cards, and you are still short of the length requirement, you may need to **go back and do some more research!**

The Works Cited Page

T he last page of your research paper is called the **WORKS CITED** page. You may know it as the bibliography or list of sources you used in your paper. On this page you will record **in alphabetical order** all the sources cited in your paper. **"Cited" means** you **quoted or** got information that you **paraphrased** (*put in your own words*) in the text of your paper. If you did not use a work in your paper, it should not be listed on this page.

Follow these guidelines when writing your WORKS CITED page:

- **Center** the title (WORKS CITED) one inch from the top of the page. **Don't** underline, italicize, bold, or use any special font.

- Just as in the rest of your paper, the WORKS CITED page should be **double-spaced**. **Don't put any extra spacing between each** source **entry.**

- **Begin** each entry right at the **left-hand margin**. Continue typing in the information for each entry all the way to the right-hand margin. If the entry runs more than one line, use the hanging indent option to **indent** the **additional lines five spaces** in from the left margin. Resist the inclination to double space after the entry; the next entry will begin back at the left margin.

- List each entry **alphabetically by** the first item listed on your source card, which is in most cases **the author's last name.** If there is no author, use the first word(s) of the title for your alphabetization, and just work it in wherever it would fit alphabetically; however, do not alphabetize using the articles (a, an, the). **DO NOT** separate the sources by type.

- **Do NOT number** the sources in your WORKS CITED list.

SAMPLE WORKS CITED PAGE

WORKS CITED

Creamer, Kevin J.T. <u>The Milton-L Home Page</u>. 19 November 2000.

    University of Richmond. May 11, 2014

    <http://www.urich.edu/~creamer/milton/>.

Darst, Anne. "Young, Gifted, and Black--and Inspired." <u>Black Theater</u>. Ed.

    Lindsay Patterson. New York: Dodd, 2009. 221-76.

Edsall, Thomas Byrne. "London's 'To Build a Fire.'" <u>English Journal</u>. June

    1999: 86-94.

Ehle, Barry. "The Sun." Solar Astronomy Class, Smith Academy. Fort

    Wayne, Indiana, 19 March 2014.

"A Look at the Photosynthesis Process." <u>Science World</u> 23 January 2010:

    15-20.

"Photosynthesis." Encarta Encyclopedia. CD-ROM. Microsoft, 2015.

Toms, Richard. "Thurber, James." <u>Encyclopedia Americana</u>. 2011.

Vare, Ethlie Ann, and Greg Patek. <u>The Life of William Faulkner</u>. Chicago,

    IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

If you have done your source cards accurately, you will notice that they contain the same information in the same order. Refer also to the **MLA Handbook** for other types and examples, or ask your teacher how he/she prefers you list a certain source.

Please pay careful attention to details--periods, underlining, and spacing should appear exactly as above!!!

The Title Page and Other Details

The **MLA Guidebook** is very specific about the **look** of your paper. Listed below are the **components of your paper and the order** in which they should be organized. Here are some details you need to keep in mind:

The Title Page

This page is **single-spaced.** Type the following information on the following lines as shown.

Line 1	<u>Junior English Research Paper</u>
Line 5	**Title of the Paper**
Line 9	Junior Academic English, period 1
Line 18	By Student's Name
Line 28	Mr. Gregg Taylor
Line 29	Wayne High School
Line 30	Fort Wayne, Indiana
Line 39	December 12, 2010

The Outline

Follow the instructions discussed on the <u>outline page.</u> Don't forget the **heading** and **page numbering**.

Page One

Page numbering starts at 1 (even if you had an outline), and you must begin with the proper **heading** (see <u>rough draft page</u>). **Center your title** above the first paragraph. In *every part of your paper* you will **double space**.

The Paper: Pages 2-last page

Use **one-inch margins** all around (as on every page), placing the **page number a half inch** from the **top right corner**. To simplify matters, use the **header option** and the computer will do this for you. Remember to **use transitions** as you move from point to point so your paper is unified and flows together nicely. Don't forget to end your paper with a **conclusion paragraph** that sums everything up and restates your main point. Often, your conclusion paragraph will include a **reworded thesis statement** to tie everything together.

The Works Cited Page

Follow the guidelines given on the <u>works cited page</u>. Remember to **number this page** with the next number that comes after the number of your final text page.

Get excited!
You're almost finished!

Proofreading and Preparing to Submit Your Masterpiece

You've got the whole shebang all typed out, and you think you're ready to hand it in! Congratulations! Before you submit your paper, however, you need to be sure that you don't have any glaring errors that will negate all the hard work you've done.

Proofreading, in fact, is **one of the most important steps** in any kind of project, but it's especially crucial for a big report like you've just finished. Hopefully you have planned ahead enough to **allow for some revision.**

> **NOBODY can type up a perfect report that doesn't need any kind of correction!**

Your first step should be to **print a hard copy** of the report so you can look at it very meticulously. It's amazing how errors that can slip by your eye on the screen become hideously obvious on paper! Although **spell check** is a wonderful tool (and you should *definitely* use it), it can't know that you were supposed to use *than* where you used *then*, for example. Nothing can take the place of careful **reading and re-reading** to eliminate errors. (Avoid relying on the grammar check and thesaurus features of some word processing programs; they tend to be confusing, unnatural, and often inaccurate.)

Next, **find someone** who is willing **to read your report critically**. It's essential to choose someone who:

- is themselves a decent writer

- is relatively familiar with the rules of standard English

- understands the assignment (you can brief them on this, if needed)

- will take the time to read with a critical eye

No one is going to have as much of a personal investment in your assignment as you are, though. The following **checklist** will help you to inspect your paper for flaws so that you can hand in a report that is the absolute best you can do.

Research Paper Checklist

BEFORE YOU TURN YOUR PAPER IN, ASK YOURSELF:

✓ Did I **proofread** and **change** all errors in: **spelling**?
- **verb tense**?
- **capitalization**?
- **punctuation**?
- **run-ons/fragments**?

✓ Do I have an appropriate **title page**?
✓ Have I included an **outline**, if necessary? Does it follow the **correct format**?
✓ Does my **paper follow my outline**?
✓ Does the **first page** of the actual paper follow the **correct format**?
✓ Are my **pages in order**? Are they **numbered** correctly?
✓ Did I **double space** the entire paper, including outline and works cited page?
✓ Do I **stick to my thesis** and **not include irrelevant info**?
✓ Did I make sure **not to refer to myself** or the process of writing the paper?
✓ Did I write the entire paper in **third person** (not using *I* or *you*)?
✓ Does my **works cited page** follow the **correct format**?
✓ Have I used **parentheses in every paragraph** (except possibly intro and conclusion) to show **author and page** of where I got that information, **regardless** of whether I quoted directly or put it into my own words?
✓ Have I **limited** my use of **direct quotes**?
✓ Have I used **my own clear and simple wording**?
✓ Is my paper **neat and presentable**?
✓ Am I turning in my paper in a **two-pocket folder** with my name visibly written in the upper right-hand corner in the **correct order**, i.e., title page, outline, text, works cited page, with the **source cards, note cards, photocopied sources**, and **rough drafts**?

You did it!   You're Done!   Way to Go!