

**A GUIDE TO WRITING  
THE RESEARCH PAPER**

*for freshmen and sophomore history  
classes at George School*

**Meredith Alford  
History Department, George School  
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# INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PAPER

## **The Research Paper**

Your days of writing reports for history classes are over. At earlier stages in your educational career you were likely asked to research a topic and then write down everything you learned about that topic, thereby “reporting” the history of a specific topic. Writing a research paper at the high school level still involves research and reporting, but you are building on these skills and adding ANALYSIS to the information. This means that you no longer simply write what happened, but you have to provide a perspective on history through analytical argument.

## **Academic Research**

As you progress in your educational career, you will be expected to do more individual research. The goal of this research, especially if you pursue graduate work or an academic profession, will be to add new knowledge to your chosen academic field. It is important to know that history—while yes in some ways is the study of what happened in the past—it is not a static field. Our knowledge and understanding of past events is constantly changing and evolving based on new information we discover from archaeology, archives, and the conversations historians engage in with each other. When you write a research paper you are thus entering into this conversation, meaning that the goal is to participate in a global dialogue about the meaning, effects, and significance of events in history.

## **Using Research for Analysis**

The heart and soul of the research paper is the thesis statement— a one-sentence statement of your argument. Your thesis is the part of your research paper that connects you to the scholarly conversation. If you do not have a thesis, then you are not writing a research paper.

HOWEVER, note that we do not call this a “thesis paper.” A research paper is a scholarly argument supported by facts and analysis. You cannot make a strong, academic argument without supporting your argument with facts. It is thus important for you to become as knowledgeable as possible in your topic.

“Because I think so,” is not a compelling argument. You need to have extensive knowledge from a diverse set of sources to support your claims.

# SELECTING A TOPIC

## Where to Begin

You are strongly advised to select a topic that is interesting to YOU. You will be spending a great deal of time reading, thinking, and writing about this topic. The project will be easier and your writing will be better if you choose a topic you want to know more about. Students in the past have gone to Google and searched “good research paper topics.” You can indeed generate a quick list of topics using this method, but rarely have these topics turned into good research papers. More often than not, students who use this method get bored or find the topic too difficult for the resources available to a high school student. Think about what subjects interest you, what events you want to learn more about, and what topics you feel passionate about. Writing is best when the author is interested in and passionate about the topic.

Your research paper topic will eventually have to be rather narrow in scope. It is almost impossible to be too specific. However, it is the rare student who can identify off the bat a narrow and focused topic on which he or she wants to write a paper. Instead of writing a paper broadly on the Civil War, for example, a student may need to narrow it to: how surgical procedures during the American Civil War led to more efficient medical practices in the contemporary U.S. To do this, start by thinking about a broad topic like a person, an event in history, or an issue in which you are interested. Then begin your research. Once you know more about the topic you can narrow your scope.

## How to Hone a Topic Down

After you have selected a broad topic, begin your research. This is the easiest stage of research because you generally can collect many books and websites if your topic is broad. You do not, however, have to read 10 entire books before you can narrow your interest. Look over the Table of Contents and the Indexes in your sources. When you see a section that you find interesting, read it thoroughly for more specific areas of interest. Every time you narrow your research, search again for new books and sources. It can sometimes feel like a treasure hunt, but this is the easiest way to narrow your research.

An Example: The example above—how surgical procedures during the American Civil War led to more efficient medical practices in the contemporary U.S.—is an actual topic from a past research paper. This student began, however, with simply wanting to research the Civil War. There is a huge amount of information on this topic and while this is a good place to start, the Civil War itself is WAY TOO BROAD. This student realized he was interested in the medicine used during the Civil War. He was then able to narrow the sources he wanted to use, and to further specify his focus on surgery. After fully researching his topic (surgical practices during the American Civil War), he was then able to select resources for research that fit his topic and his interests well.

### **Changing Your Topic**

While you can change your topic at any stage of your research, it is not always advisable to do so. Sometimes you hit a roadblock and cannot find the sources you need to write the paper you want. Sometimes you realize after two weeks that you hate your topic and cannot bear to read another sentence about it. It is always better to change your topic than to continue with an impossible paper, but you will not be granted an extension for changing your topic. Therefore, the longer you wait to decide to change your topic, the more work you will have to do over and you may find yourself in a serious time crunch. It is for this reason that it is wise to choose carefully from the beginning.

### **Changing Your Argument**

If you are struggling with your topic, you might first want to consider changing your argument. Sometimes it is not the topic itself that poses the problem, but your angle on the topic. Changing your argument often opens up new sources for you to use, and can also help alleviate your writer's block.

You also may find that you change your mind as you do more research on a topic. Perhaps you began writing a research paper on how plagues caused the fall of Rome, but after reading extensively on the topic you found yourself instead wanting to argue that the emperors' mismanagement of tax revenue caused the decline of Rome. This is completely fine and is a natural part of academic research. Nevertheless, you should run the new argument by the teacher to make sure your argument is still strong.

# THE THESIS STATEMENT

## Thesis Statement

The thesis is the most critical component to clear and persuasive writing. Your thesis statement should be one concise sentence that presents your paper's argument. Remember that this research paper is not a report; you should be analyzing research and making an argument.

A successful thesis statement is concise and clear. It should also be something that the reader could oppose. An overly general statement like “the Industrial Revolution was very influential” is not a successful thesis statement. Instead, be specific – if you are having trouble making an argument, ask yourself does my thesis explain “how” and “why.”

And remember, over the course of your research, you may decide you want to argue a different point. *It is absolutely fine to change your thesis statement over the course of the writing process.*

## Examples of Weak Thesis Statements

- “*World War II was bad.*”
  - This thesis statement is way too broad. What does the author mean by “bad?” Did it damage the economy? Did it hinder future international diplomacy? Avoid general terms like “good” and “bad.” To avoid this, **make sure you are always explaining “how” and “why.”**<sup>1</sup>
- “*The Industrial Revolution began in England.*”
  - Make sure you are in fact making an argument. The thesis statement above is simply an indisputable historical fact. Would anyone argue with the statement above? No—so you are not really engaging in an analytical argument.
- “*Greek religion and Roman religion are very similar.*”
  - Comparing groups or events is often a direction many students want to go. Compare and contrast essays are good for practicing your writing, but for a research paper you cannot simply compare and contrast. You have to identify the **significance** of the comparison. Again, ask yourself “how” and “why” to get from a simple comparison to a more complex explanation of how this comparison leads to a change in our understanding of history.

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<sup>1</sup> “Thesis Statements,” The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/thesis-statements/>.

## Examples of Strong Thesis Statements

- *“The Treaty of Versailles led Europe to World War II because of the unfair economic and military restrictions it placed on Germany.”*
- *“Japan surrendered to the United States in World War II not because of the atomic bomb, but because of fear of a Russian invasion.”*
- *“Though Alexander the Great’s conquests were impressive and vast, his legacy is weak because he failed to set up infrastructure to establish any lasting political system in the Macedonian Empire.”*
  - All of these thesis statements are specific. They each explain the *why* and *how* of the argument. Most importantly, they offer a perspective on history that could be disputed by another scholar.

## How to Test your Thesis Statement

There are a few ways to determine if you have a strong thesis statement:

- **You must explain how and/or why.** See the examples above. Imagine, for example, that the first thesis statement above was simply “The Treaty of Versailles led Europe to World War II.” This is a compelling argument, but you need to explain how and why, which will be the key to a successful thesis statement.<sup>2</sup>
- **Try to identify a counter argument.** If someone could not argue against your thesis, then it is not an argument. “Japan surrendered to the United States at the end of World War II,” is not a thesis statement, but a factual statement. Your thesis statement has to be an idea with which someone could argue. It has to be a unique perspective that you defend through research and analysis.<sup>3</sup>
- **Answer the question “So what?”** This will help make sure your argument has historical significance. Again, looking at the above examples, imagine the third thesis statement was simply “Alexander the Great failed to establish a lasting political system in the Macedonian Empire.” This is an interesting statement, but it is more a statement of fact than a thesis. The “so what?” component is the heart of your argument. In this case, explaining that your argument is that Alexander’s legacy was weak as a result of his failure to establish a lasting political system answers the “so what?” question.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Thesis Statements,” The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/thesis-statements/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

# COLLECTING EVIDENCE

There are many ways to find evidence, and the sources you use will largely depend on the topic you choose. Below are several resources available through our library that will help you get started. You are also strongly encouraged to consult with the George School librarians, who can help navigate a specific research plan tailored to your individual project.

## **The George School Library Catalogue**

Books should be the first sources to which you go. This is because you can find a wealth of information in a single book, they are easy to navigate using the Table of Contents and the Index, and you can be sure that the information in the book has been fact checked and peer reviewed. Thus, books provide both breadth and accuracy in your research.

Our library has a great many books geared specifically towards topics students frequently choose for their research papers. The first place you should begin therefore is the George School Library Catalogue. You can access this online through the library gateway on the George School website (<http://mda.kohalibrary.com/cgi-bin/koha/opac-main.pl>). If you are having trouble finding a book in the library, any George School librarian can help you.

If you are having trouble finding all of your required books in our library, you can also consult our e-book catalogues and your local library.

## **Academic Websites**

There is a tremendous amount of information available on the internet. It is thus an excellent resource for scholarly research. On the other hand, there is also a tremendous amount of insufficient, inaccurate, and biased information on the internet. It is thus imperative that you make sure that information you pull from the internet is truly academic.

- **What makes a website “academic?”**
  - There are a vast number of websites out there with information about history. Very few of those are truly academic. To be considered an academic website, the source must be backed by an institution or “peer reviewed.” This is because the institution or the colleagues of the author will ensure the information is accurate. An individual’s blog, for example, may have lots of historical information, even accurate information, but is not a good source for academic research. Instead, for academic research you must use only sources that have been professionally checked for accuracy.
- **The .org myth**
  - There is a belief amongst students that .org websites are always good sources. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** The .org after a website simply means the website belongs to an organization. The quality of the information depends on the quality of the organization. A museum of natural history, for example, will likely have good



information to use for historical research. A political organization that promotes a particular perspective may have accurate information, but it will also likely provide a biased presentation. This does not mean you cannot use the website, but you need to apply scrutiny to the sources you use and understand when and how a source may be biased.

- **Identifying the Publisher of a Website**
  - Sometimes information online looks official and so we want to believe it is a good website. Before you can determine whether the information qualifies as an academic source, you need to identify the publisher of the website. For a good academic website, this information should be easy to find because the institution supporting the information will be prominently displayed. Publisher information, if not displayed prominently, can usually be found in an “About Us” section or all the way at the bottom of the web page. If all you can find is an individual’s name, with no credentials, no institutional affiliations, etc., then it is likely just an individual’s blog made for hobby and the information CANNOT be considered academic.
  
- **Reliable Academic Websites**
  - Without question, the best resources for academic information are universities. Departments will frequently have websites and databases for a particular topic that offer a wealth of information, all critically reviewed and fact checked. Fordham, for example, offers a great Internet History Sourcebook which is an excellent database for ancient and modern history alike. Similarly, Yale’s Law School has an excellent database of primary documents. Museums, governments, and NGOs also often have reliable information that you can consider academic in nature.

### **Online Journals and Databases**

George School subscribes to several excellent online databases, which will allow you to search newspapers, encyclopedias, and academic journals online. Below are two recommendations to get you started. Remember though to seek out a librarian’s assistance for resources that are specially tailored to your project.

- **JSTOR**
  - This is a database of journal articles. They are usually very specific and garner a relatively sophisticated collection of research and academic analysis. These articles are also a good model for what your research paper should look like. These articles are the professional version of your research papers!
  
- **Gale History in Context**
  - This database provides access to a number of encyclopedias, magazines and newspapers, and journals, on a wide variety of subjects pertaining to history. This is a great place to begin your research (it is a better place to begin than Wikipedia!).

# CREATING AN OUTLINE

An outline both organizes and maps out your paper. It looks like a bulleted list that employs numbers and letters to identify the primary topics and sub-points of each section in your paper. It is helpful to draft and outline early on in your paper. As you delve further into your research, your outline can be expanded to become more specific and you can change the order of your sections to fit the needs of your writing.<sup>5</sup>

A very basic early outline might look something like this:

- I. Introduction
  - A. Though the war continued for 12 more years, Athens lost the Peloponnesian War when they decided to invade Sicily and failed.
- II. The Peloponnesian War
- III. The Sicilian Expedition
- IV. The slow demise of Athens
- V. Conclusion

As you continue your research, you could expand on each topic:

- I. Introduction
  - A. Thesis: Though the war continued for 12 more years, Athens lost the Peloponnesian War when they decided to invade Sicily and failed.
- II. The Peloponnesian War
  - A. The Archidamean War
    - 1. Pericles' defensive strategy
    - 2. The Influence of Alcibiades
- III. The Sicilian Expedition
  - A. The breaking of the Herms
  - C. The trial of Alcibiades
    - 1. Alcibiades' defection
  - D. Failure in Sicily
- IV. The slow demise of Athens
  - A. Sparta's retaliation
    - 1. The Decelean War
  - B. Athen's failing infrastructure
    - 1. Democracy
      - a. Samos
    - 2. Economy
      - a. The Battle of Notium
      - b. The Battle of Aegospotami
- V. Conclusion

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<sup>5</sup> Ben Croucher, "How to Write an Outline," George School, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.georgeschool.org/Academics/Library%20Gateway/Help%20with%20Research/Research%20Process.aspx>.

## How to structure your outline

For a long research paper, you will need to think about how you want to organize your research. Doing this in advance will help you plan your argument, order your research, and cite your research properly. Being organized from the beginning and having these steps completed will greatly help once you sit down to write the paper.<sup>6</sup>

There are many ways to structure a historical research paper. Below are some often used methods:

- **Chronological:** Many people opt for chronological organization, where the paper tells the story of an event in chronological order, with analysis woven in throughout. The outline above adopts chronology for the basis of its structure. This structure is often best when you are trying to demonstrate cause and effect. This works because early on you establish what happened and then you can use a past event to explain how it led to the next round of events.
- **Thematic:** If you are writing a paper where you are comparing a variety of events, cultures, or people, a thematic structure may work best. So, for example, an outline for a paper comparing the military leadership of Augustus and Tiberius may divide the paper up by areas of leadership (command in the field, control of the Senate, use of tax revenue, etc.). This would allow the author to compare two or more figures simultaneously by looking at one theme at a time.
- **Categorical:** Like the thematic method, organizing your paper by categories allows you to compare people and events. If, for example, you are writing about the peacekeeping efforts of Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, you could write the first part of the paper on Mandela, looking at his personal history, his work in civil rights, and then his use of the international community for South Africa. You could then utilize the same structure to examine Mahatma Gandhi.

How you organize your outline is up to you. There is no inherently right or wrong way to organize your information, but you want to think about your outline in terms of building an argument. Which structure will allow you to most effectively present and build your argument? What knowledge do you need to present first, in order to analyze and set up the next section?

Remember, too, that your outline serves as a map of your paper, but it does not have to be a static one. You can edit your outline and structure the whole way through the process.

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<sup>6</sup>Elysa Tardiff and Allen Brizee, “Why and How to Create a Useful Outline,” The Writing Lab and the OWL at Purdue University, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/02/>.

## CITING SOURCES

For any piece of scholarship, the academic integrity of the paper is of utmost importance. Since your thesis statement is supposed to be your own unique analysis and perspective on a topic, it is crucial that your argument and analysis are both indeed yours. To pass off someone else's analysis as your own is dishonest. It is of course necessary, however, for you to use other's scholarship in order to build your own. Remember, when writing a research paper it is as if you are entering into a conversation with other scholars. It is therefore important that you use proper citations to delineate what is someone else's research and analysis and what is your own.

The George School official statement on academic dishonesty is:

### *Academic Dishonesty*<sup>7</sup>

Acts of academic dishonesty (cheating and plagiarism) undermine our community's values, harm other students, and constitute major school rule violations. Cheating is the provision of or use of unauthorized assistance in: taking quizzes, tests, or examinations, and in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments. Plagiarism is copying or imitating the language or ideas of another and passing it off as one's own work. The clearest form of plagiarism is copying someone else's work word for word, without using quotation marks or full and clear acknowledgement. Another form of plagiarism is paraphrasing without properly citing the source. Simply putting information in your own words does not make it one's own. Students need to be particularly careful not to plagiarize when using Internet sources.

Incidents of academic dishonesty may be brought before the Discipline Committee. The committee's response usually includes probation for academic dishonesty for as long as the student stays at George School, demerit restrictions, and five or ten hours of community service. The teacher may also fail the student on the relevant assignment. Most colleges require students to report incidents of academic dishonesty in the college application process.

It is extremely important for you to use proper citations to avoid academic dishonesty. If you have any question at all about what constitutes academic dishonesty, ask your teacher.

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<sup>7</sup> "Community Handbook" George School, accessed October 5, 2011, [https://my.georgeschool.org/ICS/Campus\\_Life/Community\\_Guide\\_and\\_Handbook/](https://my.georgeschool.org/ICS/Campus_Life/Community_Guide_and_Handbook/).

# PARAPHRASING

Once you have read someone else's academic writing, it is sometimes difficult to put it into your own words. There are times when the language in a source is so perfect you want to directly quote a passage. This is fine, and you simply have to put quotation marks around the passage that you have copied word for word. Other times, however, you want to use some information or someone else's idea, but you want to put it in your own words. *It is important to understand that simply changing vocabulary is not paraphrasing.* To paraphrase, you must understand the author's idea completely and explain it in your own language.<sup>8</sup> Below are some examples of how you can cite a passage.

## **Original Passage**

History is the most interesting subject in school. It allows students to explore people and events from all other subjects, showing how each of these people and events impacts the world. It also helps to connect all facets of the world together into one story that tells the existence of mankind. Everyone should love history because history is part of who we all are.

## **Proper Quotation**

"History is the most interesting subject in school. It allows students to explore people and events from all other subjects, showing how each of these people and events impacts the world. It also helps to connect all facets of the world together into one story that tells the existence of mankind. Everyone should love history because history is part of who we all are."

## **Unacceptable Paraphrasing**

History is a very interesting subject. History allows people to learn about famous figures and occurrences from every academic discipline, and it demonstrates how all the academic disciplines have shaped the world we live in today. History connects people and narrates the story of the world we live in. History is part of everyone and so therefore we should all love and study the subject because it tells the story of the world.

## **Acceptable Paraphrasing**

While history may not be everyone's favorite subject in school, it is important that we study history. Every individual is connected to history because history is the story of all academic fields, all events, humans, and knowledge. It allows us to understand who we are, where we came from, and how we got here.

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<sup>8</sup>Jerry Plotnick, "Paraphrase and Summary," University College Writing Center at the University of Toronto, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/paraphrase>.

## How to Avoid Plagiarism when Paraphrasing

It is difficult to paraphrase well. Providing a direct quotation is much easier. One problem is when students read a particular passage several times over, the language and structure gets stuck in their heads.

- **Look Away.** One way to deal with this problem is to read a passage only once and then *look away* and write down what you think the author meant. Try to write as if you were explaining it to a younger sibling, even if this is not how you write in your paper. Then, go back and compare the language you use.
- **Watch your structure.** Do not simply change the vocabulary and think you have put it into your own words. If you just copy the passage and put each sentence into your own words, you are plagiarizing the structure of the author. You need to put the passage into your own structure for it to be truly paraphrased. *Using a thesaurus is not paraphrasing.*
- **Watch your vocabulary.** Sometimes authors just have the perfect phrase or word to describe their ideas. It can be nearly impossible to avoid using someone else's vocabulary entirely. In the examples on the previous pages, for example, using words like "history" and "the world" are inevitable. Words like "interesting" and "facet" on the other hand are stylistic choices that you should be careful not to copy.

### \*\*\*\*\*Make Sure You Provide Citations\*\*\*\*\*

Regardless of whether or not you provide a direct quote or choose to paraphrase, YOU MUST ALWAYS CITE THE PASSAGE. A footnote is needed any time you use information presented in a source, whether that information is a set of facts, analysis, or an idea or opinion. *The only time you do not use a citation is when you are writing your own analysis and explaining your own argument.*

### When in Doubt, Use a Direct Quote

If you are struggling to paraphrase or are not sure if you have paraphrased well, you can have someone else (like a teacher or librarian) check. Alternatively, if you are not sure, you can always just use a direct quote and save yourself the anxiety of worrying about whether or not you are copying someone else's language or structure.

- **Block Quotes**  
As a general rule, your quotations should be under 3 lines. You should not be copying and pasting large quantities of text from your sources. Sometimes, however, you really need a large passage for the point you are making. In these rare cases, you can opt to include a "block quote," and you must designate it as such by indenting the entire passage .5", separating the text by an extra line before and after the quotation, and formatting the quotation with single spacing. Try to avoid doing this more than 2 times per paper.

# FOOTNOTES

In accordance with proper Chicago Style (the official citation style for history), all research should be cited with footnotes. Throughout your paper you will have many footnotes—probably around 3-5 per page. If you have fewer than 3 per page, you are likely not providing enough research (or perhaps not providing proper credit), and if you have more than 5 footnotes per page, you are perhaps including too much research without proper analysis.<sup>9</sup>

**To create a footnote in Microsoft Word, go to “References” and select “Insert Footnote.”**

A footnote will be a little number *at the end of the sentence*, after the punctuation of the passage you are citing.

There are many reference guides available for how to cite information in a footnote using proper Chicago Style. The easiest guide is the Chicago Manual of Style website:

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

Since the most common citations you need are for a book or a website, below are the basic formations for the proper footnote for both of those sources.

- **Footnote for a book<sup>10</sup>**
  - Look at the example below. Notice that the author’s name comes first, then the title of the book is put in italics. The publishing information—the city of the publisher, the publisher, and the copyright date—are all put into parenthesis. Lastly, a specific page number is listed followed by a period.
- **Footnote for a website<sup>11</sup>**
  - Look at the example below. Notice that when there is no explicit author, you may put the title of the article first, in quotation marks. The publisher of the website, the date you accessed the page, and the URL follow.

The first time you cite to a source, you must put a full citation, which usually includes the author’s name, the title of the source, publishing information, and page numbers. Or, when citing to a website, you need the author’s name, the title of the article, the publisher, the URL, and the date accessed. Every subsequent time, however, you only need to provide the last name and page number, or in the case of a website, the URL.

## **Ibid**

“Ibid” means “in the same place.” In instances where you are citing from the same source several times in a row, you may use “Ibid” instead of rewriting the entire citation. See the footnotes on page 7 for an example.

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<sup>9</sup> Jules R. Benjamin, *A Student’s Guide to History* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007), p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 167.

<sup>11</sup> “Edicts of Ashoka,” PBS, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/thestoryofindia/gallery/photos/6.html>.

### Footnotes versus Footer

Students commonly try to put all of their citations in a “footer.” This is not an accurate way to cite. Your citations should not repeat every page. You further need a separate citation every single time you cite, because you likely are pulling information from various pages of your sources.

To be clear about what NOT to do, here is what it looks like when you try to create citations in a footer:

Most of the missionaries who came to China during the 1500s had relatively little impact. China, because it was self-sufficient, saw little need for outside goods and ideas and therefore adopted a policy of isolationism. They thus scorned many of the missionaries who tried to influence Chinese society.<sup>1</sup> Matteo Ricci, however, was the first missionary to gain some cultural influence within China. This was largely due to the fact that Ricci began to adopt Chinese culture himself, slowly making compromises between his Italian Jesuit perspective and the Chinese Confucian worldview.<sup>2</sup> Elements of Confucianism, like tian, the notion of heaven, and the importance of humility, arguably situate Confucianism amongst all the world religions.<sup>3</sup> Ricci appreciated these overlaps and worked to understand China’s Confucian beliefs through his Jesuit beliefs. This in turn allowed Ricci to understand Chinese culture, which made him better able to communicate with the Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Ricci was therefore one of only a few missionaries during this time who was able to penetrate Chinese culture.<sup>1</sup>

Notice that in this **incorrect** example, “the footnote” for the Global Interdependence textbook is always designated as “1,” which does not allow the author to specify a specific page. A *separate* citation should be given for EVERY SINGLE piece of research. The footnotes should further be chronological, as modeled in this research guide.

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1. Roger Beck et al., *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction* (Illinois: McDougall Littell, 2009).

2. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

3. Rodney L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).



# THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Footnotes versus Bibliography

Footnotes are used when you are citing a specific piece of information or a passage from a source. A bibliography, on the other hand, is to be used to list *any source* you used to inform your research for a paper. This means that even if you did not directly cite to a source, but you used it to understand your topic and gain knowledge that helped you form your argument, you should include it in your bibliography.

## Placement

The bibliography should come at the end of your paper. As noted above, you should re-cite any source to which you cited, along with any source you used to understand more about your topic.

## Format

The bibliography should be alphabetized by authors' last names (or, when no author is available, by the title).

The sources should be single spaced, but there should be double spacing between each source.

Online tools like EasyBib and Noodle Tools can help you to quickly and correctly generate a bibliography.

It is important to note, however, that the format used for a footnote varies slightly from the format used for a bibliography. One example of this is that in a footnote, the first name of the author comes first. In a bibliography, the last name comes first. See the example below:

### Footnote Citation:

<sup>3</sup>Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 65.

### Bibliographic Citation:

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Notice that when writing a bibliographic citation, the last name comes first, followed by the first name. Periods separate all major information—author's name, title, publishing information. Lastly, unless you only used one single portion of the book (like one chapter), you do not need to cite a specific page number in the bibliography.

For a sample bibliography, please see the bibliography to this research paper guide on the last page of the packet.

# EVIDENCE OF RESEARCH

In order to prove your thesis statement, you will need evidence to back it up. Using a wide variety of resources, you should gather as much information as you can find that relates to your argument. You may want to select a quotation that could help support your argument, or maybe some crucial statistics. You should then organize your research into the outline you created. Make sure that each fact or quotation has a footnote. See the example below.

## I. Introduction

A. Thesis: If Europe had supported Germany economically after World War I, as the United States attempted to do, Germany would not have become so desperate, and Hitler would not have been able to rise to power.

## II. Aftermath of World War I

### A. Treaty of Versailles

1. “The treaty also punished Germany. The defeated nation lost substantial territory and had severe restrictions places on its military operations. As tough as these provisions were, the harshest was Article 231. It was also known as the “war guilt” clause. It placed sole responsibility for the war on Germany’s shoulders.”<sup>12</sup>

## III. Hitler’s rise to power

### A. *Mein Kampf*

1. *Mein Kampf* was an autobiography that Hitler wrote while in prison. It described his political ideas and suggested that all races other than the Aryan race were inferior. He promised to rid Germany of non-Aryans and regain Germany’s rightful territory, which they lost in World War I.<sup>13</sup>

## IV. Economic conditions in Europe

### A. Appeasement

1. Britain was scared of another war. They did not have the economy to support another war, and World War I had destroyed the morale if its population. They took the strategy of appeasement, hoping that by giving in to Hitler, they could avoid another war.<sup>14</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Organizing and citing your research as soon as you collect it will help you maintain a clear direction for your argument, it will make sure you are researching efficiently, and it will help you avoid academic dishonesty, by citing your research from the beginning.

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<sup>12</sup> Roger Beck et al., *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction* (Illinois: McDougall Littell, 2009), p. 425.

<sup>13</sup> Beck, p. 478.

<sup>14</sup> “Adolf Hitler’s Rise to Power,” Dickinson State University, ; accessed 25 January 2012, <http://www2.dsu.nodak.edu/users/dmeier/Holocaust/hitler.html>.

# ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH

Because the goal of this paper is to express your own argument, it is vital that you not simply copy and paste facts that you have found into a paper, but instead you must analyze each piece of information that you provide in support of your thesis. Typically, you should have at least 3-4 sentences after your quotation or set of facts, explaining the information and arguing why this information supports your thesis statement. To begin the first stages of analysis, make sure you can explain in your own words how each piece of research you have collected supports your argument. See the example below. For clarity, the analysis has been put into italics:

## I. Introduction

A. Thesis: If Europe had supported Germany economically after World War I, as the United States attempted to do, Germany would not have become so desperate, and Hitler would not have been able to rise to power.

## II. Aftermath of World War I

### A. Treaty of Versailles

1. "The treaty also punished Germany. The defeated nation lost substantial territory and had severe restrictions placed on its military operations. As tough as these provisions were, the harshest was Article 231. It was also known as the "war guilt" clause. It placed sole responsibility for the war on Germany's shoulders."<sup>15</sup> *Though all European countries suffered from the aftermath of World War I, Germany suffered the most. They were blamed for the war, which caused resentment on their part. Further, their debt caused their economy to collapse. This debt made them desperate for anything or anyone who could help pull them out of an economic crisis.*

## III. Hitler's rise to power

### A. *Mein Kampf*

1. *Mein Kampf* was an autobiography that Hitler wrote while in prison. It described his political ideas and suggested that all races other than the Aryan race were inferior. He promised to rid Germany of non-Aryans and regain Germany's rightful territory, which they lost in World War I.<sup>16</sup> *Though originally this book was not popular, ultimately Hitler's ideas gained power within Europe. People were so desperate for change that they wanted to believe anything.*

## IV. Economic conditions in Europe

### A. Appeasement

1. Britain was scared of another war. They did not have the economy to support another war, and World War I had destroyed the morale if its

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<sup>15</sup> Roger Beck et al., *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction* (Illinois: McDougall Littell, 2009), p. 425.

<sup>16</sup> Beck, p. 478.

population. They took the strategy of appeasement, hoping that by giving in to Hitler, they could avoid another war.<sup>17</sup> *Economic conditions dominated international policy following World War I. Japan, Italy, and Germany were all desperate for solutions to their economic crises. France, Britain, and the U.S. were too scared to take action. This combination of anger against fear launched the world into World War II.*

## V. Conclusion

### **Making Analysis Your Own**

The analysis portion of your writing is the portion that is distinctly your own. This is the part of your paper where you input your own ideas and you draw conclusions based on the research you have collected in support of your argument. When analyzing your research to support your argument, there are a few easy ways to make sure your analysis stays your own:

- **You can summarize, but make sure you do it *in context*.** Do not simply restate what another author has said. You can, however, explain how this research fits into your own collection of research and the narrative you are creating through your argument. Explain what the research means as it pertains to your thesis.
- **Focus on the significance of the evidence.** Return to the “so what?” question. When you put research into your paper, use your analysis to explain how and why this research has significance to your overall argument.
- **Connect it explicitly to your thesis.** Do not leave your reader guessing, and do not assume your reader agrees with you. Make your connections clear and explain exactly how your research supports your argument.
- **Avoid useless language.** Do not bother with sentences like “I think...” or “This supports my thesis because...” When writing a research paper, your thesis and analysis are your own, so your voice and opinion are always implied. You do not need to bother explaining that this is your opinion specifically. Your citations will help delineate what is your own idea and what are others’ ideas.

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<sup>17</sup> “Adolf Hitler’s Rise to Power,” *Dickinson State University*; available from <http://www2.dsu.nodak.edu/users/dmeier/Holocaust/hitler.html>; accessed 25 January 2012.

# WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

The first draft of the paper can feel intimidating. If you have carefully followed the steps of the research process, however, you should already have a solid foundation of research, which has been carefully organized, cited, and analyzed. If you have done all those steps, writing the first draft should be relatively straightforward. It is important, when writing the first draft, to consider the function of each paragraph. Accordingly there are descriptions of each type of paragraph below:

## The Introduction

The introduction is the reader's first impression of your paper, so it is important that it is well-constructed. Your introduction must include:

- A general overview of your paper
- **Your thesis statement**
- A “road map” of your argument that gives the reader a preview of *how* you are proving your argument

Most often, you will be encouraged to write in a “reverse pyramid” structure, beginning your introduction with very general information, getting more specific as the paragraph goes on, and ending with your very specific and unique thesis statement. A visual chart of this most commonly used structure is on the following page.<sup>18</sup>

Alternatively, you can opt to employ a “pyramid” structure in your introduction, stating your thesis in the beginning (sometimes the first line!) of your paper, and then becoming more general as you progress, while you explain your argument and map out how you plan to prove it.

How you choose to structure your paper is up to you. It is largely a stylistic choice, but it is important that you make a conscious decision about where to put your thesis statement in the introduction and how you want to introduce and present your research paper. If your argument or explanation in the beginning is convoluted or incomplete, your reader will have a hard time following your logic through the rest of the paper.

*YOU MUST INCLUDE YOUR THESIS STATEMENT IN THE INTRODUCTION.* Students sometimes want to start their papers with a question, and then slowly answer that question over the course of the paper. It is OK, when coming up with a thesis, to start with a question, but you do not want your reader to feel like he or she is on a treasure hunt. Remember, after reading your paper, your reader will hopefully be convinced of your argument. If you do not state what that argument is from the beginning, however, you decrease the odds that the reader will understand the goal of your paper.

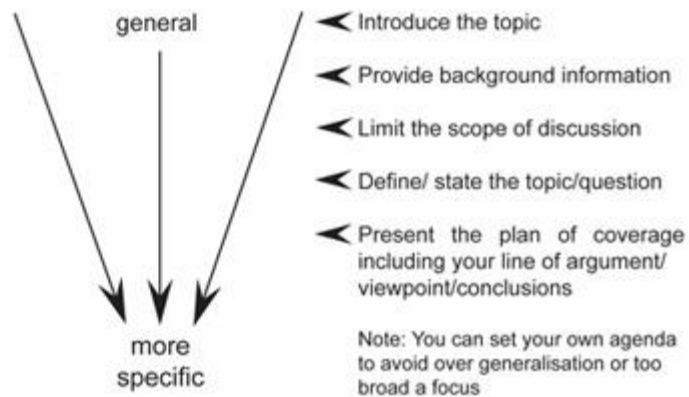
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<sup>18</sup> “The Structure of an Essay,” Monash University, accessed July 22, 2013, <http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/medicine/psychology/essay-structure/3.xml>.

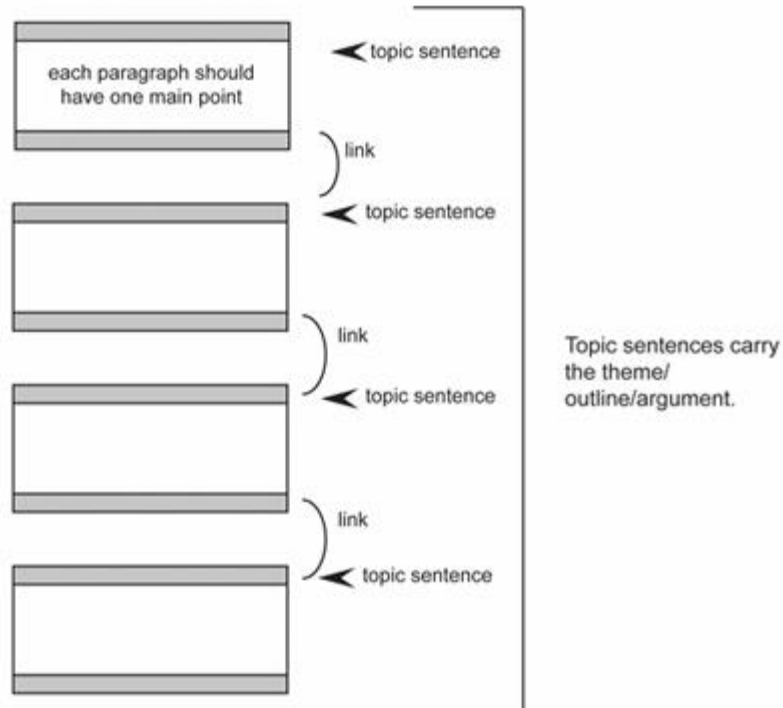
# The Structure of an Essay

## Introduction

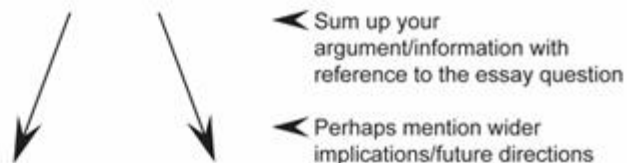
(Approximately 10% of the total length. May be one paragraph or several, depending on essay length)



## Body



## Conclusion



## Body Paragraphs

The body paragraphs of your paper make up the meat of your argument. In general, you should have only one idea or main point per paragraph. Each paragraph should be around 5-7 sentences, though this may vary with some paragraphs ending up a bit longer when you have either a large block quotation or when you are making important and complex analysis of your research.

There are several components to the body paragraphs.

- **A topic sentence:** Your topic sentence should both transition from the preceding paragraph and state the general topic of the present paragraph.
- **Research:** As explained above, you must *always* support your argument with research. A body paragraph is not complete without some research (and therefore, a citation to your source). This research may appear as a set of facts via a direct quotation or a paraphrased passage.
- **Analysis:** Since this is not simply a report, you must fully analyze your research to explain it in the context of your topic and demonstrate how it supports your argument.
- **Concluding sentence:** This sentence summarizes the point of your paragraph and should also, when appropriate, help transition to the following paragraph.

Notice that both your research and analysis should be complete before you begin your first draft. You are thus mostly working on your transitions when you write the first draft, and also making sure that each paragraph has a point that is clearly and accurately presented.

## The Conclusion

The biggest mistake students make when writing conclusions is to simply summarize what they have already written in the paper. While yes, the conclusion should function to wrap up your paper—and so you will need to restate your argument and provide a brief recap as to how you supported it—your conclusion serves an even more important role: *explaining why your paper matters*. You want your reader to come away from your paper thinking that it was worth his or her time to read it. A good conclusion therefore explains why this paper is important. The easiest way to accomplish this is to connect your very specific thesis to a larger context. Explain how your argument changes our perspective on history, or why your argument encourages a different course of action for humans. Showing how your argument can have a real, concrete impact on the world will make the reader feel validated for taking the time to read your paper.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “Conclusions,” The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill, accessed July 22, 2013, <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/>.

# THE FINAL DRAFT

After all the work you have put into the paper, turning a rough draft into a final draft can feel painful. At this point you may be sick of your topic, you might not remember where you read various facts (which is indeed why it is so important to cite your notes, so you never lose track of information!), and you are likely generally burnt out from the entire research paper process.

The final draft, however, is the most important draft. This is the draft that earns the grade. As a professional, this would be the draft that gets published. So how do you turn a rough draft into a final draft? There are several steps to editing:

- **Correct all spelling and grammatical errors.** It is very important that you present a polished paper. Spelling and grammatical errors make your paper appear sloppy, and in turn, your argument becomes less credible if you have clearly not taken the time to polish your writing.
- **Reconsider your structure and the flow of the paper.** Does your argument make sense in terms of the order you have presented it? Make sure there is a single overall consistent structure. Check your transitions and make sure that the movement between body paragraphs is fluid and not surprising or abrupt.
- **Make sure your paragraphs are not redundant or tangential.** After all is said and done, sometimes you end up with several paragraphs that make essentially the same argument. Consider whether you really need them all. Try to delete any redundant arguments. Similarly, make sure you really need all of your paragraphs. Sometimes your research will send you on a tangent and in the final stages of editing you might realize that a particular piece of research is no longer necessary for your argument.
- **Check your citations carefully.** Even if you have checked your citations 10 times already, check them again. Academic integrity is essential to your career as a student and a professional.
- **Step away from the paper.** Put the paper out of sight for a few days. Do not research or read anything that pertains to your topic. Come back to your paper with “fresh eyes.” Doing so will help you read your own writing with a bit more perspective. Similarly, giving your paper to a parent, friend, or teacher for more feedback can be very helpful.

Remember that when you write a research paper you are entering into an academic conversation. To this extent, you could edit forever while considering alternate perspectives, accumulating more research, fine tuning your argument in the context of new ideas, etc. At some point, you have to meet a deadline, so you have to wrap it up. If you have considered the above suggestions while editing, feel proud of all your work and turn that paper in!



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Why can't I use Wikipedia?**

Wikipedia can be an excellent online resource. It is especially good when you are beginning to think about topics and want to browse around to learn a bit more about areas in which you are interested. To this extent, it can be a resource when writing an academic paper. *If you do use it to learn more about your topic and to help you hone down your topic, you should include it in your bibliography (because it was part of your research and knowledge).* You SHOULD NOT, however, cite directly to Wikipedia. This is because it does not meet the criteria to be a fully academic website, as described in the section on Academic Websites in "Collecting Evidence." Wikipedia is not reviewed and edited by professionals in an academic institution and thus you cannot assume that all information on Wikipedia is accurate. The best way to use Wikipedia is to look directly at the citations on Wikipedia and to do your own fact checking using the original source.

### **Why can't I use the first person?**

Using the first person (or writing statements like "I believe...") in academic writing is not technically grammatically incorrect. It is, however, redundant. When someone picks up your paper to read it, that person assumes he or she will be reading a paper written by you, which will use research to explain and support *your* ideas. Your perspective is thus implied in your writing and there is no need to use "I" to signify it. Further, if you emphasize the subjectivity of your argument, you can also undermine the strength of your own position. Consider these two statements: "In my opinion, pugs are the best dogs in the world." Or "Pugs are the best dogs in the world." Your language is clearer and more potent when you leave out the first person.

### **There aren't any books on my topic. Do I have to change topics?**

Maybe, but it is unlikely. Before you decide that there is no research out there on your topic, make a consultation with a librarian. Students often are just not searching the right way. If, for example, you are writing a research paper on the Detroit car industry, you cannot always find results simply by searching "Detroit car industry." You may need to search separately for "Detroit," "cars," "automobiles," "transportation," etc. It is very rare for a student to pick a topic on which no books are written.

### **Why can't I use just one book for my research paper?**

When researching, you will likely find one or two sources that you depend on for most of your research. It is OK if there is not a perfectly equal distribution of research from each source. It is important, however, for your research to come from a variety of sources. Remember that the goal of this paper is to "add something new" to the conversations among historians. If you simply regurgitate information from one or two books, you are not adding anything new, but simply repeating the work of others. If you use a wide variety of sources, you might not be making a completely new argument, but you will be proving this argument in a new way, which is an important part of the academic dialogue.

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