

The Research Paper

The term "research paper" is sometimes used interchangeably with expressions like "report," "library report," "term paper," or simply "paper." In spite of the fact that these expressions are sometimes used interchangeably, they do not always refer to the same kind of paper. The first step then is to determine what exactly is required of you.

REPORT: *reports what you have read. . . Summarizes information that was usually gleaned from a single source -- an article, chapter or book. They are objective and concerned only with the facts...*

Ex.: the training a meteorologist needs, how a radio works, the vehicles that carried people into space during the first 20 years of space exploration, what Benjamin Franklin's political life was about, the plot Herman Wouk developed in War and Remembrance

FACTUAL RESEARCH PAPER: *a more complex kind of report... summarizes information from several sources, perhaps both print and non-print, both primary and secondary .. merges information from various sources into one smooth, coherent product .. deals with facts...*

Ex.: see above, but using several sources

EVALUATIVE RESEARCH PAPER: *goes beyond mere reporting .. may address solutions to a problem, determine causes or effects, formulate evidence to prove or disprove, compare or contrast, assess, analyze or interpret .. reader gains a new point of view or sees information in a new light...These types of papers prove some sort of valuable point*

Ex. prove the superiority of one space vehicle over another, analyze Franklin's writing style and how it may have affected his political career, compare the treatment of war in Wouk's War and Remembrance with that in his earlier novel Winds of War.

Your research paper will be an EVALUATIVE RESEARCH PAPER of approximately 2,000 words (or around 8 pages) in text written in the MLA style.

GOALS

This research writing project is assigned because successfully completing it will enable you to:

- learn the skills to do library research
- gather facts and ideas on a specific subject
- hone your writing skills
- report accurately what you have discovered
- provide the reader with sources
- evaluate and select from among many ideas
- develop a thesis and defend it
- improve your thinking skills.

"The longest journey begins with a single step."

Like most types of writing, research writing is done over a period of time. In other words, it is a process, and it can be broken down into a series of steps or tasks. Instead of staring terrified at the Mountain of THE WHOLE PAPER, attack the Steps, or Tasks one step at a time:

1. Choosing your subject
2. Doing preliminary research
3. Limiting your subject to a specific topic
4. Finding an angle and writing a statement of controlling purpose
5. Preparing a list of possible sources (a Working Works Cited)
6. Taking notes and developing a rough or working outline
7. Organizing your notes and making a final outline
8. Writing your first draft
9. Revising your draft
10. Writing the final draft with a complete list of Works Cited

1 Choosing Your Topic

#2 Doing Preliminary Research

#3 Limiting Your Topic

- * Choose 2-3 possible topics that interest you from the list.
 - * During your time in the media center, you will search for sources for these topics and select the one for which you will be sure to find plenty of information. Begin to accumulate bibliography cards.
 - * As you search, begin to think of the best way to narrow your general topic into a limited one which can be writing into a controlling statement.
 - * While you are in the media center, familiarize yourself with the resources available in print, on film, online, etc., and how to access them.
1. What is the general topic you have chosen to write about? _____
 2. What other topic ideas did you seriously consider? (Write your 2nd. and 3rd. choices)

 3. What are your reasons for choosing this topic? _____
 4. What are your feelings as you begin this project? _____