

So . . . you're about to write a research paper? Good for you! Here are some terms you will need to know...

RESEARCH PAPER - A general research paper is a paper that organizes the ideas and words of others. It is formal in tone and organized. It requires citation of sources in order to avoid plagiarism. Research papers are broad in scope and attempt to organize much information into one convenient place.

THESIS STATEMENT – A thesis statement is a powerful sentence. It is one complete sentence that encapsulates the argument that will be argued in the paper. It is always a complete sentence, although it may stem from a research question. It usually hints at the reasoning behind the belief, and it features a debatable argument.

For example, could these sentences be thesis statements?

Mark Twain wrote *Huck Finn*. – This is not a debatable argument.

Mark Twain's *Huck Finn* is controversial because of its language – This is a true statement, but it is not a debatable argument.

Mark Twain's *Huck Finn*, despite its controversial language, is still a novel that has much to offer young people. – This is a debatable argument.

THESIS PARAGRAPH – The thesis paragraph is simply the paragraph that contains the thesis sentence. It is the first paragraph of the paper. Thesis paragraphs are sometimes described in terms of triangles or diamonds. A “triangle” paragraph is a paragraph that begins with its main point or thesis and then becomes broader or fuller as it continues (such as the shape of a triangle has a point at the top and gets fatter as it goes down). An upside-down triangle paragraph is one that begins in a broad and general sense, becoming more specific as it goes along, and ending with its main point or thesis. A diamond paragraph is one that starts with a point, gets broader, and then returns to its point. Which of these styles do you prefer?

OUTLINE – An outline is an organized guide that helps a writer recognize the order of ideas which will best serve his or her argument. It is a plan that helps a writer organize ideas. It is also a plan that helps a teacher check a student's line of thinking before the paper is written.

SOURCE – A source is any place where information is gained. Sometimes it is tangible like a book or a magazine. Other times it is less tangible, like an interview that happened between two people on July 9th, 2007, or a website that is constantly updated. There are many different types of sources and many different rules for how to cite those different kinds of sources. Classifying a source by genre is just one way to classify it. You may also consider a source as primary or secondary. A **primary source** is one that is original. It does not attempt to refer back to any other source. A **secondary source** attempts to discuss or analyze another source. For example, L. Frank Baum's The Wizard of Oz book is a primary source. A magazine article ABOUT The Wizard of Oz is a secondary source. You need to focus on primary sources for this paper, but it is all right to include some secondary sources. Check with me if you have questions.

CITATION- Citation is the act of providing recognition of your sources within the body of your paper. For example, if I use someone else's words or ideas in my paper, I need to cite or list the place where I got that information. Maybe I got it from a website, a book, an interview, or a movie. It doesn't matter where I got the information, but it is important that I give credit to that source. There are several different methods for citation. The most popular styles include MLA, APA, and the Chicago style. We will be using MLA style for this research paper.

PLAGIARISM – Plagiarism is the use of non-acknowledged words or ideas which are not your own. Plagiarism may be intentional or accidental. Accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism. It is illegal and immoral to plagiarize the ideas and words of others. Professional people AND students can get in terrible trouble for intentional or accidental plagiarism. **Being ignorant of the proper methods for citation is not an excuse for plagiarism.** If you are careful when you record information onto note cards and then into your paper, you will not be guilty of plagiarism. When in doubt, cite the source!

WORKS CITED - A works cited is an organized list of all sources that were consulted in the research of your paper. It serves as another form of recognition aside from the internal references. It is most handy for readers who wish to visit your sources for further information. There are strict rules regarding the organization, order, and format of bibliographic entries. This style is determined by your choice of citation method. MLA bibliographies and APA bibliographies may look similar in some regards, but students will need to check with official style handbooks or online resources to create a properly structured bibliography.

NO ONE WAS BORN KNOWING HOW TO DO THIS!
PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS.

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