



THE RESEARCH PAPER

What is it

The research paper is a typewritten paper in which students present their views and research findings on a chosen topic. The paper is usually between five and ten pages long, with most teachers specifying the length. It is expected that the student will choose an appropriate topic, gather information about it, and report the findings in a paper.

Types of Research Papers

There are two main types of research papers. The first is the *report paper* which summarizes the student's findings on a particular subject. The student does not judge or evaluate the findings but presents them in a logical order and in his own words. The second type of research paper is the *thesis paper*, which takes a definite stand on an issue. The thesis is the point of view or argument that the student is making in the paper.

Most instructors assign a thesis paper because it requires the student to exercise judgment, evaluate evidence and construct a logical argument. Be sure you know which type of paper you have been assigned to write, and be certain that your instructor has approved your choice of subject or thesis.

10 Basic Steps in Writing the Research Papers

1. Choose a subject and limit it to a specific topic.
2. Do some general background reading on your subject in the library.
3. Organize your ideas in a logical sequence and form a rough outline.
4. Make a list of all the places you want to check for material.
5. Using the library and the librarian, begin your research.
6. Read carefully and take good notes. As you go, list where you found your information.
7. Organize your notes and prepare the final outline.
8. Write (or type) the first draft and revise it carefully. Make parenthetical citations as you write your draft, noting author's name and page number where you found your information.
9. Prepare a list of bibliographic citations (using assigned citation style guide, such as MLA or APA). Authors cited within your report must be listed at the end of the report as "References" or "Works Cited List."
10. Refer to more sources (if needed) to refine and revise the final draft.
11. Remember to use the "spell checker" if you are typing your report in a word processing software, such as Microsoft Word or WordPad.

Choosing a Subject

Follow your instructor's suggestions however try to interest yourself as well. Try to pick a topic that will be treated in available reference sources. Try to limit your topic to an issue about which you can express a point of view. Refer to the Library handout on [Project Ideas](#) if you don't know where to begin.

Background Reading

The most useful beginning point for search is a reliable general encyclopedia. Use the index volume to the set and read all of the citations so that you get a broad overview of your topic.