

Research Papers



For many people, the research paper is the most daunting academic task. You can rest assured, however, that it is by no means impossible. Once you have a clear plan of attack, writing the research paper, though arduous, is no more difficult than following an intricate recipe for chocolate cake.



FORMAT

A research paper is nothing more than a glorified long essay, so it will have the same basic construction.

INTRODUCTION

Some papers will ask you to prove some sort of argument and others will ask only for loads of information about a subject. If you are trying to prove a thesis, indicate that during the introduction. If you are writing a purely informative paper, set forth the subject of the paper in the introduction

along with the aspects of the subject you intend to discuss.

BODY OF THE PAPER

The body of the paper consists of the information you have garnered through your extensive research. In a paper that presents an argument, the body includes a cogent support of the argument. It also includes one section for the opposition's case, which you then endeavor to disprove. You make your own argument much more convincing by allowing the reader to see the counterarguments made, and then a reasoned rebuttal of such.

In an informational paper, the body presents all the research on your subject, in a logical and organized manner.

Separate your research into themes, and then build the paper theme by theme, using paragraphs to separate them. In a paper of over twenty-five pages paragraphing may not be sufficient to separate your themes. In that case, subsections may be necessary, and within those subsections you may need to create paragraphs. Whatever format you select, make sure you maintain it consistently throughout your paper.

Research papers also allow for other media such as photographs and illustrations, so the body of the paper often includes both text and visual material. Take full advantage of this and use them where appropriate to accent and allow the reader to attach visual images to the text. A research paper is like a long magazine article, and what usually interests you in long magazine articles? Not just the information presented but also the manner in which it is displayed and—let's be honest here—the fancy pictures. A research paper should be interesting, and a pleasing layout can be an important part of that.

The body of the paper refers to sources quite regularly, as that is the aim of a research paper. Any direct quotes from sources or paraphrases from research sources are footnoted. This means, after a quote or para-



phrase, put a number (these references will go in order of the paper) and at the bottom of the page (the foot, get it?) you write the source of the note, including title, author, publisher. You will find more information on how to write footnotes in the Specifics section of this chapter.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion restates the main point and indicates how the paper has accomplished it. If your paper argued for a particular thesis, reiterate how that thesis was proved by the successive examples. If your paper described a phenomenon, summarize the information presented and what it showed you.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Here you will indicate the sources you used for the information you presented in the paper. Anything you read that aided you in your understanding of the subject is included here according to the guidelines described in the Specifics section of this chapter.

HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER, WITH TIM



STEP 1

THE TOPIC

Some teachers may assign a specific topic, but most will provide a possible range and allow you to select your own. A research paper is an opportunity for your teacher or professor to assess your research and writing skills. Typically, your instructor will assign a paper of some specified len-

gth—5, 10, or 20 pages—on a variety of topics. “Cover some important issue about Colonial history in the early 1800s,” she might say. It is then up to you to select the exact topic, find out all there is to know about it, and write the thing. For instance, our friend Tim might be assigned a paper.

Tim is taking a class in Nutritional Sociology and his teacher announces, “A five-page research paper on some way sugar’s influence is seen in our society, due in one month. I expect you to research and annotate this responsibly.”

The most important criteria for a topic are its interest to you and the breadth of the topic.

INTEREST TO YOU

If the topic you select holds no appeal, it is very doubtful your paper will be interesting to you or your reader. This can lead to problems, because if you are not interested, it will be that much more difficult to get yourself to write the darn thing, and what you do write will not be your best. Even if the range of topics does not light your fire, try to find an angle that does. You may not be interested in the Reconstruction Era of the South, but you may be interested in the race relations, health care, or leisure activities of that time. A bit of research here into the range of topics from which you have to choose can be extremely beneficial. Read for things that catch your interest. Look at titles of books for ideas on what other writers have been interested in; you may be inspired.



Tim reads up on sugar at the library. He talks to people in the street about sugar. He eats a packet of sugar straight out of the sugar bowl in a restaurant, provoking complaints to the management from other customers. He listens to “A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down” and briefly considers writing his paper about sugar in the modern American musical; his research is blocked by his inability to find any other references to sugar in musicals, with the notable exception of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which he finds frighteningly hallucinatory. He is seen walking through the street clutching a bag of sugar and shaking his head, bewildered.

BREADTH OF TOPIC

This is generally the stickiest issue when writing a paper. You want your topic to be small enough to cover in a paper, but broad enough that you can wring 10 or 20 pages out of it. Though you would be astounded on what people can base a 200-page book, a paper on the Reconstruction Era South would probably need closer to 1,000 pages, while the sash of Robert E. Lee’s uniform would probably fill only one good paragraph.

Tim briefly considers a paper about sugar in general, then goes to the library and finds 250 books on that topic. Too many. He regroups and considers a paper about the first bite of a candy bar; is it different from the other bites? He returns to the library, finds nothing. He plunges into a deep depression.

STEP 2**CHECK TOPIC WITH THE PROFESSOR OR****TEACHER**

Before you begin slogging through obscure tomes searching for the perfect quote, make sure the topic you have chosen is an acceptable one. Few things are worse than starting a huge bulk of research or writing only to find out that it was all for nothing. If your topic is off the mark, your teacher can guide you to one more suitable. You can't lose by asking.

Tormented, Tim visits his teacher after class. He confesses his troubles and she says, "The first bite of a candy bar?"

"Yes," sobs Tim. "It's the part of a candy bar I love best."

"Well," she says, "if it's candy bars you're interested in, why don't you do some work on that? Myself I'm a Milky Way fan. I love nougat."

Tim nods to himself and thinks, "She's just the type to like a Milky Way. Sweet, but a trifle dull." Then he considers this: could it be that specific personality types like specific candy bar types? Thrilled, he proposes this thesis to his teacher, carefully avoiding any mention of Milk Way lovers as unexciting. Intrigued, she approves his paper topic.

STEP 3**NOTES & RESEARCH**

Your main task is to find out as much as you can about your topic. You may be writing a research paper in which you are arguing for one thesis or another, or you may be describing a particular situation or phenomenon. Go to the library and find as many books about your topic as you



can. Investigate periodicals, too. You can look in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, usually kept up at the reference desk near the librarian. Look in the subject guides and see what articles have been published about your subject in the last year or two. If you see any that look applicable, find them.

Ask your librarian for help; librarians are terrific and very willing to assist anyone in this type of situation. Maybe you'll get lucky and your article will be on microfilm and you will get to use the cool microfilm machine. Also ask your librarian about using the library computer to help with your research. Even if you're not comfortable with computers, the librarian will be able to show you how to use one without fear.

It is not necessary for you to read every word of every book or article you find. Once you have amassed a collection, look through the tables of contents of the books and read those chapters that seem applicable. Look in the bibliography of these books for suggestions of other books that might be helpful.

As you collect your reference material you should start taking notes. The jury is out as to whether index cards or legal pads are more helpful. The truth is, whichever method makes you feel more organized and businesslike is the one to use. It is imperative that your notes be taken in an organized manner, because often this stage of the paper allows you to get your thinking done, and the more organized and clear your thinking, the better your paper. For each book or article you read you should have a separate set of cards. At the top of each card put the title of the book from which the notes were gathered. Then, at the top right corner of the card mark how this note applies to your paper. This can be even easier if you

use color coding. For instance, if your paper describes the secret lives of presidents, you might put the title of the book on the left, *The Best and the Brightest*, and on the right a red mark indicating that this book is about Kennedy. Keep a master list explaining all your color codes and other reference marks in case you confuse yourself. Writing down quotes from books that strike you as important or particularly relevant is also helpful. Noting the page number here will come in handy when you want to footnote. Set aside a list of illustrations and photographs related to your subject.

Tim spends the next two weeks at the library, poring over psychiatric journals and candy wrappers. He sets up a complex cross-coding system involving colors and shapes. Cards related to daring types he marks with a triangle, stayathomes he marks with a square, tormented souls get a circle. Caramel candy bars are yellow, mint is green, mixtures are purple.

Nougat Quarterly	
According to Professor Whipt, those who like nougat are often confused as to what nougat actually consists of, and what the difference is between caramel and nougat. Many teens admitted to eating nougat before listening to heavy metal music and joining satanic cults. Connection???	
“Nougat seemed to be the only substance to offer the subjects comfort.” p. 73, article titled “An important study”	

Tim has been working feverishly at the library. So thrilled is he by Professor Whipt' s article that he looked in the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature listing by author and found three more articles by Whipt written in the past year. Tim collects fifty cards; his confidence grows. He knows he has something here.

STEP 4 MAKE AN OUTLINE

Once you have most of your research completed you are ready to begin your outline.

An outline is absolutely indispensable for a research paper because it gives you an idea of what you are writing and what you need to write next. Also, since it separates your paper into discrete chunks (an unpleasant image, no?), if you get sick to death of writing a particular section, you can just start writing another section that appears more interesting.

An outline is a sort of annotated table of contents for your research paper, and writing this outline provides you with an opportunity to organize your thoughts and your paper. The outline then provides you with a structure.

WRITE YOUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

You already have an idea of the subject of your paper, now you need to describe this subject with some sort of concise statement. For example: The purpose of this paper is to compare the courting rituals of men and women in late-twentieth-century urban areas.

ORGANIZE YOUR CARDS

Separate your cards into the order in which you want to refer to their top-

ics. Depending on the length of your paper, you may have 3 to 30 subcategories. Try to organize them so that related subjects are close together, and there is some sort of natural transition between paragraphs.

WRITE YOUR CONCLUSION

We know, you've already written your statement of purpose in the first part of the outline, but it can only help to make it clearer to yourself, and the conclusion should refer to the organizational structure you've set up to support it.

Tim considers, at home with his note cards. Just what is his thesis? What does his research lead him to? He knows there is a psychology to which chocolate bars different people choose, but what is it? He writes:

Thesis: Candy bars and personality, is there a connection? Yes.

Tim consults his note cards and orders them into a logical thought process.



J. Psycholegy has long posited that there is a strong connection between the types of foods we eat and our psyches.

A. Hegg's study of food and society.

1. Quote about judging society by food on card 2.
2. How long study went on.

B. Weird nutritional shakes in American society.

1. Calvinist.

C. Food preferences of people throughout history

1. Pres. Clinton
2. Romans

II. Nutty Nougat, other mixed versions

A. People desperate for action

III. Caramels

A. Sentimentality

1. quote on card 7.

IV. Nut bars

A. The tough guy: peanuts and machismo

V. Solid chocolate bar

A. high-minded? or

B. repressed?

VI. Coconut bars

A. sometimes you feel like a nut?

1. Psychopaths and coconut.

VII. Butter Krisp, toffee bars, Tasty Toffee

A. are they really classier than the rest of us?

VIII. The opposition, the idea of taste as personal issue

A. Card 24, Dr. Faust says there is no connection, we all have free will.

B. Card 26, Dr. Phelgud says taste changes over eras

IX. Rebuttal

A. Swiss studies, television commercials

B. Fashion analogy

XI. Conclusion. The connection between candy bars and personality cannot be ignored, and allows us all to know more about sugar and the world we live in, and the way it affects us.

Tim sets his paper down next to the ordered cards, sets his books next to them, and takes a well-deserved break.



STEP 5 CHECK YOUR PLAN

When your outline is finished you should have a paragraph-by-paragraph plan of attack. Do you know what each paragraph is to be about? Does each paragraph support your statement of purpose? If the topic of the paper is in the form of a question, does your outline answer it? When you can answer yes to these questions, you are officially ready to write.

STEP 6**WRITE A ROUGH DRAFT**

Many writers prefer to leave the writing of their introductory paragraph till the end, when they know exactly what they will be introducing. You probably want to start writing the paragraph that will follow the introduction, the paragraph in which you begin discussion of the topic. Here, your research index cards will come in handy. You already have your cards organized for each paragraph; now use them, making clear your quotes and paraphrases with footnotes, and presenting the findings of all that research. Follow your outline carefully, going paragraph by paragraph, keeping your cards in order for easy reference by the end. Give yourself plenty of time; burnout and exhaustion lead to sloppy writing. When you get to the end you can write your introductory and conclusive paragraphs, which will be fairly similar.

STEP 7**TAKE A DAY OFF, THEN REREAD & EDIT****THE PAPER**

Once you have written your paper according to the form of your outline, you have what is known as the first draft. You will probably want to take a day off after finishing the first draft to give yourself some breathing room before you come back to edit it. Make sure one paragraph flows smoothly to the next. Make sure you have given credit where credit is

due. When paraphrasing or quoting you **MUST** credit the source, inserting footnotes as you go along.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN YOU ARE EDITING YOUR PAPER

- Do I make a convincing case for my point?
- Do I present the story of whatever I'm describing in an interesting and engaging manner?
- Are both my arguments and the opposition's arguments clearly presented?
- Does each paragraph serve a clear function either in describing the phenomenon or arguing the case?
- Do the sentences flow logically?
- Does each sentence serve a clear function in its paragraph?

If you find an unnecessary paragraph or sentence, eliminate it. If you have not made your point, look to find where you have strayed from your outline. Rewrite any illogical sentences. If you have a trusted friend you may want to have her read it, but bear in mind you will then be eternally in her debt. This is all a lot of work but it is work that is absolutely essential for a good paper. Also check for misspellings and grammatical mistakes. Make sure you read your paper through at least twice, correcting errors as you go along. Once you have edited and cleaned up any errors, you are ready for the final touches.

Editing Drill For The Research Paper

Edit Tim's five-page paper, paying attention to the editing guidelines in chapter four. We mean it; we actually want you to write in the book. Get a red pen and go. Then compare with the edits in the section following this paper.

Candy Bars and Psychology

Psychology has long posited a connection between the psyche and taste in food. The noted professor of food and psychology, Ima Hogg, says, "While many attempt to discover the secrets of the mind through outmoded techniques of psychoanalysis and clinical psychology, the true frontier on which we are discovering the key to personality is by assessing what people eat. Beyond this we cannot hope to go further." (WRITE IN FOOTNOTE FOR HOGG'S STUDY) Hogg's studies relating diet and psychosis went on for over twenty-five years, and they clearly show what any reasonable person has long suspected: you are what you eat. Think of the current fad of liquid diet shakes, so appropriate to our American society, caught between the Calvinist puritanism of our history and the relentless greed and selfindulgence of our current market economy. Consider President Clinton and his fondness for fast food, the food of a person of action, someone ready to lead!

Or remember the self-destructive habits of the romans, fulfilling the slightest desire with loads of tempting delicacies, then running off to the vomitoria to rid themselves and be-



gin again. This demonstrates a clear connection between what one eats and who one is. And indeed, the existence of a connection between food and personality points to the likelihood of a connection between candy bar choice and personality disorder.

Many studies have been done to test this theory and the results of them are here.

Much has been written about those candy bars that combine the various candy elements: nougat, caramel, nuts. The desire for all the things at once, the inability to make any sort of a concrete choice is typical of the boy/man who suffers from the peter pan syndrome, and the combination bar is his candy of choice. This is evidenced on grounds both academic and emotional. In her groundbreaking treatise on the subject, Dr. Lotta Kaloreese interviewed a group of 2,500 male participants between the ages of 23 and 55. Of those who said they were either in-