## Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines

### Assignments and Due Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Point Value/Grade Value</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>100 / 1 Daily Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Consulted</td>
<td>100 / 2 Daily Grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis and Outline</td>
<td>100 / 2 Daily Grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough Draft with Works Cited</td>
<td>100 / 2 Daily Grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission to TurnItIn.com</td>
<td>100 / 1 Daily Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Draft</td>
<td>100 / 1 Test Grade</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Most Commonly Used Documentation

All documenting will be done in the same basic order. If you do not have certain information, skip it.
The order is as follows:

Author (Last Name, First). “Title of Article if Appropriate.” Title of Book. Any additional publication information (including but not limited to editors’ names, edition numbers, series name, volume numbers); city of publication company, publication date. Source type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Template</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet source</td>
<td>Last name, First name. “Title of Article.” Title of the Website. Date Last Updated. Name of institution sponsoring the site. Web. Date you accessed it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes:
- All works cited entries will end with a period, be double spaced, and reverse indented.
- Database entries should have the publication information at the beginning of the entry.
- Dates should be written day month year. Ex: 15 March 2015
- If more than one city is listed for publication on the title page, use the first one.
- Internet sources are the most difficult to find publication information. All Internet sources will have AT LEAST the title of the page, the date you accessed it, and the source type (website).
- The letter p should NEVER precede a page number. Simply write the numbers.
- Titles books, magazines, newspapers, movies and/or CDs should always be italicized.
- You do not need to include the URL address.
- You only need to use an original publication date unless there is a revised publication date listed.
- You will need to include the source type; web, print, television, performance and so forth).

Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines

Works Consulted
The works consulted is a list of possible sources you may use in your essay. Works listed on your works consulted do not have to be used in your essay; they are simply works you may consider using.

The works consulted should be produced in MLA format: 1” margins, 12pt Times New Roman found, double spaced, alphabetized, reverse indented with the MLA heading.

Works Consulted Due Date ________________________________

Thesis Statement
The thesis statement is a single, concise, direct sentence that expresses the main idea and central point of the essay. Although a thesis statement is best when it is a complex sentence, a simple sentence is sufficient. It should be the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. The thesis should:

1. Communicate the writer’s main idea.
2. Suggest the essay’s direction, emphasis and scope.
3. Be clearly worded.

The thesis statement should not:

1. Contain vague words such why, what, or how.
2. Begin with a pronoun or with there is/are or it is.
3. Refer to the writer or the paper. Do not write, “In my opinion,” or “this paper will,” or “in this paper I am…”

Thesis Statement Example:
Although many people feel that euthanasia is inhumane, patients with protracted pain, fatal disease, or debilitating conditions should always have access to a merciful death.

Outline
An outline organizes the topics or points that will be used in your essay. The topics or main ideas that will be discussed and explained in your essay should be sequenced in a logical order for the
development of your paper; for example, cause and effect, compare and contrast, major influences, chronological order or order of importance.

For this assignment you will be required to create an outline containing three topics of discussion (Roman Numerals). Each topic of discussion will be broken down into at least two points of interest within the topic of discussion (A. and B.). You cannot create one point of interest without creating a second. All topics of discussion as well as point of interest must be written in phrases, not complete sentences or a single word. The Thesis/Outline Assignment is submitted on one page and should be in MLA format: one inch margins, 12pt Times New Roman font, double spaced, reverse indented with a MLA heading.

**Thesis Outline due date** 

Student
Instructor Name
Class
Day Month Year

**Works Consulted**


Works Consulted Grading Rubric

Three (3) Sources (33 points each)

Minus ten points from the total grade for the following:
Each missing TYPE of source (Internet, database and so forth) _________
Incorrect font _________
Incorrect margins _________
Not in alpha order _________
Not double spaced _________
Not reversed indented _________

Total Deducted _________

For each of the following subtract the number of points listed PER INSTANCE
Missing piece of information (-3) _________
More information than needed (-3) _________
Punctuation/capitalization/spelling (-3) _________
Reverse order of information (-3) _________
Total Deducted _________

FINAL GRADE _________
THESIS: Clemens, otherwise known as Mark Twain, used his rich background to create a truly American literature that both appealed to and influenced all of society.

I. Background
   A. Early life
   B. Early experiences

II. Works
   A. Gains notoriety
   B. Development of style

III. Influence
   A. American literature
   B. Present day fame
## Thesis/Outline Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margins 1”</td>
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<td>MLA heading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis (all caps)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis Statement</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Points (2 to 3 points; 3 to 5 points each)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline Format (entries in pairs)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline Parallel with Thesis (each point listed in thesis; 10 points each; 2 minimum)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(10 points each)</td>
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**Total** 100
Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines

Introduction – A minimum of three sentences giving a general introduction to the subject you are writing about. The last sentence of your opening paragraph should be a thesis statement. The first paragraph of a research paper should:

- Announce or suggest your main idea without delay
- Get the reader’s attention and interest
- Give the reader a signal about the direction you intend to take, and
- Set the tone of the paper

Suggestion: beginning an introduction paragraph with a general quote related to the subject of the essay demonstrates higher order thinking skills. Introduction paragraphs with a general, related quote should:

- Begin with the phrase, “A wise person once said, ‘quote.’ Or the quote writer’s first and last name once said, ‘quote.’
- Connect the general quote to the topic of the essay
- Have a thesis statement

The thesis statement is one sentence that expresses the point(s) of the paper; lists the points that will be discussed in the order in which they will be discussed.

Main Body – Developed paragraphs that contain effective writing techniques and explain your topic and point of view. Paragraph construction should include:

- A topic sentence – introduces the single idea that will be discussed in the paragraph (minimum of one sentence; usually only one sentence)
- A concrete detail – a quote, paraphrase, or narration that supports the idea that will be discussed in the paragraph (1 to multiple sentences)
- Commentary – multiple sentences that rephrase the quote in the research paper’s writer’s own words (what is the concrete detail “saying”) and explains the importance of the quote to the overall idea of the paragraph (what is the concrete detail “doing”).
- Connector – the last sentence or two of the paragraph that connects the idea of the paragraph to the thesis statement.

Paragraphs should:

- Be a complete, well developed singular idea
- Be clear and concise
- Contain correctly referenced and relevant documentation for concrete details
- Contain proper spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Demonstrate an orderly and unified movement of thoughts or ideas
- Have proper diction and transitional words
- Use an active voice
Conclusion – A summary of the essay; should not contain phrases or sentences used in the paper, but instead, should be rephrase highlights. Conclusion should:

- Make a recommendation when one is appropriate (a call to action)
- Tie together what you have written in general statements

Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines

Writing Introductory Paragraphs

Introductory Paragraphs
An introduction prepares the reader for the essay that follows. It draws readers into an essay by arousing their interest and making them want to read further. Introductions are often straightforward, concerned primarily with presenting information, and general in nature. The subject is introduced with broad, general sentences. It is then narrowed down in order to lead to the essay’s thesis.

The introduction should lead naturally into the body of the paper. It should also be consistent with the purpose, tone, and style of the rest of your essay. A serious, formal discussion should have a serious formal introduction. Writers should avoid opening statements that do no more than announce your subject, such as, “In my paper, I will discuss Mark Twain…” Also, avoid statements that undermine a writer’s credibility, such as, “I don’t know much about Mark Twain, but I will present my opinion concerning his writings.”

Introductions do not have a required length, but they are usually a minimum of three sentences. The last sentence of the introduction is the thesis statement.

Writing the Main Body Paragraphs
A main body paragraph should be unified and coherent. Each paragraph should be well developed, and examples should be cited properly.

Topic Sentence
The topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph and declares and controls what the paragraph is about. It should be formulated based on the thesis statement.

Concrete Details/Examples/Narration
An example is evidence of what the writer is explaining and discussing in the paragraph. It is a specific statement such as a quote, statistic, or an instance. It is always better to quote a source rather than paraphrasing it because then there is no question about its validity. Quotation marks must be used for any material copied exactly from a source.

Commentary: Develop, Explain, Qualify
These sentences logically develop the topic sentence. The commentary should be composed of at least 2 sentences that rephrase the concrete detail (what it is saying) and describes the purpose of the quote (how does the quote demonstrate the author’s purpose and support the writer’s point; what is it doing). The words and sentences used to explain and develop the paragraph are always the writer’s own words and are never copied from the source.
End Sentences/Connectors
A good logical sentence must end each paragraph. It is good to use transitions such as therefore, thus, hence, consequently, etc. The writer should formulate the end sentence by connecting the idea of the paragraph to the thesis statement.

Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines

Writing Conclusions
A conclusion should be a complete paragraph that gives readers a sense of closure. Many conclusions begin by restating the thesis statement and then give general summary statements about the essay’s main points. Conclusion should not introduce new points or go off in new directions. Since conclusions are the last words of a writer a confusing, weak or uninteresting one detracts from an otherwise strong essay. Conclusions should:

- Make the essay memorable
- Restate the main ideas of the essay
- Restate the thesis
- Summarize each of the body paragraph’s main ideas

Citing References within the Text
Use a transition and lead into the quote. Put the page number of the source at the end of the quotation. The material quoted must be relevant to the paragraph.

For example, the April 1, 2004 issue of Time magazine reports “President George Bush assured soldiers they will be leaving Iraq as soon as the country is stabilized” (23).

Smith, for example, stated in his book titled Abortion: The facts “There is a high probability that a woman can cause physical injury to her body if she has an abortion” (72).

To illustrate, in an article about capital punishment in the Encyclopedia Britannica by Thomas Smith, he remarks “Most Taxpayers do not care for criminals who have been convicted on capital murder” (130).

Writing a Title
The topic or thesis should not be the title of the paper. Neither should it be “cute, trite, or shocking.” Somewhere within the paper itself, you may find an idea that suggests a title that will attract the reader. Try to be original and avoid quotations as titles. The title is not punctuated with quotation marks or underlined; only published works are so punctuated. For the high school research paper, the title should be short and uninvolved. You may want to try using one or two important words from the thesis sentence as part of the title. The title should, of course, attract the interest of the reader.
Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines

Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Format

Short Quotations

To indicate short quotations (fewer than three typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks and incorporate it into your text. Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text, and include a complete reference in the works cited list. Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text. The parenthetical citation can be placed within the sentence immediately following the quote or at the end of the sentence.

Example:
According to some, dreams express, “profound aspects of personality” (Folkes 184), others disagree.
According to some, dreams express, “profound aspects of personality,” others disagree (Folkes 184).

Long Quotations

Place quotations three lines or longer in the free-standing block of typewritten lines, and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, indented two tabs, which is one inch or 10 spaces, from the left margin, and maintain double-spacing. Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks.

Always maintain double spacing throughout your essay!

EXAMPLE:

Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw’s door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Bronte 78)
Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines

Handling Quotations in Your Text

MLA format follows the author-page method of citation. This means that the author’s last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear in your works-cited list. The author’s name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation, but the page number(s) should appear in the parentheses, not in the text of your sentence. Page numbers are only included if they actually exist, when you actually see page numbers on the actual source (that is a pdf of the source).

For nonprint, films, TV series or electronic sources, try to include the name that begins the entry in the Works Cited page.

Sometimes more information is necessary to identify the source from which a quotation is taken. For instance, if two or more authors have the same last name, provide both authors’ first initials (and even her or his full name if different authors share initials) in our citation. If you cite more than one work by a particular author, include a shortened title for the particular work from which you are quoting to distinguish it from the other works by that same person.
Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines
Most Common Rough Draft Errors

Below are the most commonly found errors in the research paper. Check your own paper for any of these errors before you turn in your rough draft. Your grade on the rough draft is NOT indicative of what you get on the final copy. CHECK closely for all things below BEFORE you peer edit!

Outline
- Thesis is not on the page
- Less than the required number of topics
- Introduction and conclusion are on your outline

Introduction
- Too short or too much information or documentation
- Last sentence is not thesis sentences

Body paragraphs
- You do not have topic sentences
- Lacking supporting details
- No transition between paragraphs

Quotes
- You did not place EVERYTHING copied word for word in quotation marks (no one has to SAY it.)
- You have more than one long quote/more than allowed by instructor
- You do not have the required number of short quotes
- Long quote is not formatted correctly You have more than two quotes per paragraph
- Documentation has incorrect form
- It is documented but is not on the works cited page. Internal documentation and works cited MUST match!

Conclusion
- First sentence is not a restatement of thesis IN DIFFERENT WORDS
- The length is inappropriate.

Works Cited
- Sources are listed that were not used in the paper
- Does not follow proper format (alphabetical order, reverse indentations, correct citations)
- Did not use correct types of sources as required by instructor

Helpful Hints
Read paper aloud to see if it “flows” smoothly. If not, combine sentences as needed.
Check paper against outline for organization
Be sure to proofread. Check for capitalization, subject/verb agreement, and sentence fragments/run-ons.

ANY PAPER WITHOUT INTERNAL DOCUMENTATION WILL RECEIVE AN AUTOMATIC ZERO.
Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines
Rough Draft Grade Sheet

Each one of the items listed below will be worth ten points each (based on completion). Outline (minimum three topics----minimum two subtopics per main topic).

_____Introduction

_____Thesis statement (Last sentence in introduction---with three points your paper will discuss)

_____Body paragraph #1 (including transition and topic sentence)

_____Body paragraph #2 (including transition and topic sentence)

_____Body paragraph #3 (including transition and topic sentence)

_____Concluding paragraph

_____Reworded thesis (first sentence of conclusion)

_____Appropriate parenthetical citations A rough draft without parenthetical citations will AUTOMATICALLY receive a zero.

_____Works cited page (proper format, at least four sources, include Internet and print source)

_____TOTAL

Reminder: This grade is simply based on completion. It is not indicative of the grade you will receive on your final copy. Look over your rough draft check list to find major errors!
Research Paper Writing Techniques and Guidelines
Editing and Proofreading Guidelines

1. Heading is in the upper left corner and follows the MLA format:

   Student name
   Instructor Name
   Class
   Date

2. Does the paper have an effective title? It should not be underlined, italicized, or in quotation marks.

3. Review the introduction and conclusion. There should be no quotes in either paragraph and the conclusions should have no new added information. The thesis statement is the last sentence of the introduction.

4. Each main body paragraph should have a topic sentence and a logical end sentence that ties the paragraph’s idea to the thesis.

5. Write in the active voice: try using active verbs.

6. Eliminate any contractions in the paper unless they are in quotes.

7. Check all quotes to determine if they are in the correct format.

8. Review the paper for absolute terms such as all, nobody, always, everybody and so forth.

9. Use transitions to connect paragraphs, sentences, and to show an inference.

10. Eliminate all informal English such as slang, clichés, hesitation phrases and vulgar terms.

11. Delete vague references and nonsense phrases.

12. Use a thesaurus to eliminate redundant words and phrase, and to improve diction in your paper.

13. Write the paragraphs without the pronouns I, you, we, us, our, my, and your.

14. Revise. Writing is revision. Keep reviewing your paper until you feel it is in good form.
Twain: An American Icon

Few aspiring writers could ever imagine being transformed from a student sitting in a grammar school classroom to an American icon. Such a transformation would seemingly require volumes of profound writing designed to appeal to educated audiences for all eternity. Despite the magnitude of such a task, this type of transformation did occur for one American writer, Samuel Langhorne Clemens. Clemens, otherwise known as Mark Twain, used his rich background to create a truly American literature that both appealed to and influenced all of society.

Twain’s early life provided him with a wealth of experiences that would form the framework for his works. Twain arrived with Halley’s Comet in 1835, and the presence of that comet was “the most auspicious element in the child’s birth” (About). He grew up in Hannibal, Missouri, and it was the influence of this setting—the river and its frontier society—that helped develop both his pen name and his writings (“Twain” 586). At birth, Twain was actually christened Samuel Langhorne Clemens; however, he chose the pen name Mark Twain, which comes from the riverboat term for “safe water” (“Mark,” American). In addition to his work as a riverboat pilot, which ended when the Civil War stopped commercial steamboat traffic up the Mississippi, Twain worked as a journeyman printer, a journalist, a militia man, and a miner before becoming an American writer and humorist (“Mark,” American and “Mark…Biography”). In 1909, Twain humorously stated that he arrived with Halley’s Comet in 1835 and planned to leave with it. In 1910, that is exactly what he did (“Mark,” American).
In his lifetime and after his death, Twain and his works have continued to gain notoriety. Though he began writing during his teenage years, he did not become nationally known until the publication of his short story “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” which was published in 1865 (“Twain” 586). Following this success, Twain penned over thirty works of literature including “The Prince and the Pauper”, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and “A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court” (Waisman and “Mark…Biography”). Studying Twain’s works allows the reader to see this transition in his writing.

Twain began as a writer of light humorous verse; he ended as a grim, almost profane chronicler of the vanities, hypocrisies and acts of killing committed by mankind. At mid-career, with *Huckleberry Finn*, he combined rich humor, sturdy narrative and social criticism in a way almost unrivaled in world literature.

(“Mark,” American)

According to critic Esther Lombardi, Twain’s fame stemmed in part from writing that allowed readers to imagine what his life was like including his embarrassing moments, sibling rivalries and various practical jokes. In later years, this reflection of Twain’s life continued to pervade his writing. However, because his experiences became tragic, both financially and personally, the light humor of his early works faded. With age, Twain developed a bitter outlook on life and became disillusioned with people in general because they lacked character and morality (“Twain” 586). Whether the tone of his works was light or dark, however, they contain greatness in “style, scope, imagination, laughter, and tragedy” making him one of the “most quintessentially American writers this country has produced” (Lombardi).

As one of the first “truly American writers,” it is in literature where Mark Twain has most influenced American society. According to Ernest Hemingway, “All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*” (Frost). Twain was especially skillful at using dialect, and it was his writing that popularized the use of both American themes
and language in American literature. Twain was known for his witty comebacks and is one of the “most quoted American writer[s] of all time (Frost). However, literature and witty sayings are not the only aspects of American society influenced by Mark Twain. He has also made his mark in both tourism and television. Several areas in the South have made him a tourist attraction including Hartford, Connecticut, where his home is a museum and National Historic Landmark. Both Epcot Center and Disneyland reflect Twain’s influence on American society. An animatronic Mark Twain serves as a host to the American Adventure Show at Epcot, and a steam-powered boat ride that travels the Rivers of America at Disneyland is named after him. Hollywood, too, has capitalized on Twain’s image as an icon. In one episode of Bonanza, Samuel Clemens visits Virginia City, Nevada, as a reporter who causes trouble for the Cartwrights. Then Twain, again as Samuel Clemens, appears as a character in the “Time’s Arrow” episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation (“Mark,” American).

Mark Twain’s life, as reflected in his writing, provided the backdrop for a truly American literature that has continued to influence this country. Had it not been for Mark Twain, American literature might still be a reflection of its British ancestry, and Americans would never have been able to enjoy reading, or watching, the antics of their people as they are truly experienced…in America with American themes and American language.
Works Cited


