

# **HELP IN WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER**

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# Introduction

You've been assigned a research paper. Don't panic! Putting together a research paper or presentation does not have to be difficult, but it does need to be a step-by-step process. Pay attention to the early steps listed below

Searching for information and then using the information you find is a skill that you will use many times in the future. Whether it is deciding which new car to buy or comparing potential vacation spots, research is and will be part of your life.

## 6 Steps to Research

### Step 1 – Planning

- **Make sure you understand the assignment your teacher has given you.**
- Figure out what kind of information you will need to complete the assignment.
- Begin preliminary research into what you have been assigned to accomplish.

### Step 2 – Select a topic

Picking a topic can be your most difficult and most important task. Pick something that interests you. If your thesis statement is one that you genuinely want to prove or disprove, the entire project will go much more smoothly. Also, don't be afraid to revise your thesis statement based on your research.

### Step 3 – Searching for information

- Decide which sources may contain information helpful to you.
- Determine which of these sources are best for your topic.
- Come up with a strategy to search OPAC (library catalog to locate books), electronic databases, and/or the World Wide Web.
- Using your search strategy to find your sources- Take the books off the shelf and access sites electronically.
- Continue your search strategy to actually find the information you need within these sources
  - Use the table of contents and index in the books you have found,
  - Library databases and WWW searches.

### **Step 4 – Use the Information Found**

- Examine the information you have found – Remember to evaluate any information found especially WWW sites.
- Take notes – Make sure that your note cards contain all information needed to completely give credit to your sources and be aware of possible plagiarism.

(Follow your teacher’s instructions on what is needed on the cards.)

### **Step 5 – Putting It All Together**

- Organize the information you have gathered.
- Revise your thesis if necessary.
- Write your paper or create your presentation-Remember to proofread and check for any possible plagiarism.

### **Step 6 – Evaluate What You Have Done**

- Did you satisfy the requirements of the assignment?
- Is your information accurate?
- Is your final product well organized?
- Could you have done anything differently to either make your work easier or improve its quality?

Adapted from Eisenberg, Michael B., and Robert E. Berkowitz. The Big6 in Secondary Schools. Worthington, Ohio: Linworth Publishing, Inc. 2000.

## **Planning Before You Write**

### **Choosing a Topic**

- **If you have a choice, choose a topic that is of interest to you.** You will write a better paper if you care about the topic.  
\*Example: *Paranormal Experiences*
- Think about the length of your paper. Is your topic too broad or too specific to be adequately covered in the number of pages you’ll be writing? If so, **narrow down your topic.**
- Paranormal Experiences cannot be adequately covered in a 5-page paper. A 500-page book might not be long enough to completely cover that topic. Maybe UFOs is a topic that is more reasonable for a paper of that length. However, even UFOs might be too broad. You’ll need to find a specific aspect of UFOs that interests you that you could adequately cover in 5 pages.

- You'll need to know something about your topic in order to narrow down sufficiently, so it's time for **pre-research**. Go to the Library Media Center, and briefly research your topic in basic sources to find out general information about your topic. Do not worry about taking notes yet.  
\*Example: Search in an encyclopedia and other preliminary sources under your topic: UFOs. You'll discover that there are many subtopics within the topic, such as *alien abductions*, *alien sighting*, and *the Roswell incident*.
- Now that you know about your topic, **choose ONE SINGLE ASPECT of your topic** as the focus of your paper. You may find that you still need to narrow your topic further as your research progresses. Example: *The Roswell incident* may be narrowed to *The government cover-up of the Roswell incident*.

## Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is a one or two sentence explanation of the argument that you will develop in your paper.

### Why Should Your Research Paper Contain a Thesis Statement?

- To better organize your argument
- To provide the reader with a "guide to" your argument

### What Are the Characteristics of a Good Thesis Statement?

- Takes on a subject upon which people could reasonably disagree
- Deals with a subject that can be adequately treated given the nature of the assignment (not too broad or narrow for the paper length)
- Indicates your conclusions/opinions about the topic.
- **DOES NOT** use the first person (I, me, etc.)

## What Are the Steps to Developing a Thesis Statement?

1. Start with your narrowed topic! **The example is not a thesis statement** because it is not a full sentence and because it doesn't indicate what you plan to say about the topic.

- Example: *The Roswell incident* .
- Indicate the main idea on which you plan to focus. (This main idea should be something with which people could reasonably disagree.) The example is not a thesis statement because it is not a full sentence and does not indicate your conclusions about the topic.
- Example: *The government cover-up of the Roswell incident*.

2. Take a position on the topic. Use specific language, and make a claim based on the information you have found.

**This is not a thesis statement because it is too vague.**

- Example: *The Roswell incident occurred, but the government tried to cover it up.*

**This is a thesis statement.**

- Example: *The Roswell incident, in which an alien spacecraft crashed on a farm in New Mexico in 1947, is adequate proof that intelligent life outside Earth does exist; however, there is substantial evidence that the government has been trying to cover up the discovery.*

## Checklist for a Good Thesis Statement:

- States your position and takes a stand
- Justifies discussion (because a person could reasonably disagree)
- Expresses one main idea
- Uses specific language

## Searching For Information

The place to start your search for information is the LMC – **the Library Media Center**. Here you will find print sources (books, magazines, and newspapers), video and audio sources, educational computer databases as well as access to the Internet.

## Sources of Information

### **What source of information is best for my topic?**

Current topics- for information about events that happened recently (approximately a year ago or less) use:

- Magazines – print and computer databases
- Newspapers – print and computer databases
- Internet

Historical topics – for information about something that happened (approximately a year or more in the past) use:

- Books
- Computer Databases
- Videos/DVD's
- Internet

**Remember that some topics can be both historical and current.** For example, the death penalty is a topic that has been researched and written about for many years, but it still continues to be a topic that is very current today.

## Where to look

### Locating Books

#### **OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog)**

- Is found on all PC computers in the library.
- You may search by author, title or subject. Most often, you will be searching by subject (what the book is about).
- Remember that there may not be a whole book on your subject, but
- information may be included in a book whose subject is broader. For example, a book about sports may include information on baseball. Use the index or table of contents to find this information.
- Not all subjects are listed in the OPAC using the words you might expect. If the first words you use to search don't work, try a synonym. For example, if you can't find cars, try looking for automobiles.

## Computer databases

- Contains current and archived (older) newspaper and magazine articles.
- Each database has its own collection of articles.
- Use the same search strategy here that you would use in an Internet search engine.

## Internet

- Always use a search engine (Google, for example) or subject directory (Yahoo).
- Figure out the important ideas and words that relate to your subject. These key words must be the exact words you think will be in the web site and they must be spelled correctly.
- If you want to search for a phrase (2 or more words that you want to keep together), put those words inside of quotation marks. Example: “gun control” or “rock and roll”.
- Use the words **AND**, **OR**, or **NOT** to refine your search when using more than one search term. Remember using **AND** and **NOT** will lower your number of hits, while using **OR** will increase the hits you get.
- Each search engine is different and very often indexes different sites. If you don't find what you want with your first choice, try a different choice. If you get stuck, use the help section.

## Evaluating Internet sites

When you come into the Library Media Center, you know that the books on the shelf are all there because they are accurate, reliable, authoritative sources of information. Unfortunately, you don't have this assurance about information found in the Internet. Any given site may be a good source of information for research, and then again, it may not. It is up to you to be the evaluator of all Internet sites that you find. Below are some criteria to help you in this evaluation process. Remember, be suspicious! Don't accept all that you find on the Net at face value-question and investigate.

### The Address – your first clue

The important part of the URL (or the address) is the domain. It identifies the source of the Internet site and can be an indicator of the probable

reliability of the information found there. Below are examples of the different domains found on the Net and what they stand for.

.com	Stands for commercial. This means that someone has paid to establish this site. There may be a bias or an agenda behind the information given. A .com domain calls for further investigation.
.net	Stands for internet source. This is basically the same as a .com address and the same rules apply. The information may or may not be great. You must be the judge.
.biz	Stands for business. This, and other new commercial domain names are being added and the rules above apply.
.ac	Stands for college or university. This site could be the work of either a student or a professor. Look for the author's credentials.
.edu	Stands for school or university. Again, is the author a student, teacher or professor? Check the author's qualifications and any research noted in the site.
.k12	Stands for schools. The main question, again, is who is the author, and what are his or her qualifications?
.gov	Stands for government. These sites contain information published to the Web by the government and are usually very reliable (that is, if you trust the government).
.mil	Stand for military. Again, this is a government sponsored site and the rules above apply.
.org	Stands for nonprofit organization. To judge these sites, you need to find out as much as you can about the organization involved. Some organizations are excellent and others are biased

## **The Author – another clue**

- Is this person qualified to be writing this information? Is he an expert or just someone who thinks he is?
- Is there a way to contact the person or organization responsible for the site?

- Is there any reason to suspect the person or persons responsible for the site are biased and/or are trying to promote their own agenda?
- Does the site look carefully maintained? Beware of any site with typos or that looks sloppy.

## **Other Factors**

Currency	When was the site last updated? How current is the information.
Bibliography	Is there one? If sources are cited, check them to verify that they are legitimate.
Multiple Sources	Use more than one resource on your subject. Try to find books as well as several Internet sites in order to verify accuracy of the information found.
Use Recommended Sites	Take advantage of links to recommended, prescreened sites like those found at this site and others like it that you know are reliable.

# **Using the Information Found**

## **Avoiding Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using someone else's idea and pretending it is your own. So, even if you rewrite the actual words, you can still be guilty of plagiarism. When you write a research paper, you will be working with the ideas of others; therefore,

you must give them credit. “When you use another’s idea, whether from a book, a lecture, a Web page, a friend’s paper, or any other source, and whether you quote the words or restate the idea in your own words, you must give that person credit with a citation. No source may elect not to be cited”(Harris 132-3).

### **Plagiarism comes in many forms**

- Downloading or buying a complete research paper
- Cutting and pasting portions of articles or sites to create a paper
- Translating a foreign article or web site into another language and using it as your own
- Failing to use quotation marks around all words directly quoted
- Changing some words, but copying basic ideas or phrases
- Paraphrasing or summarizing ideas without giving credit

### **When do you need to give credit?**

- When you copy an exact word or phrase
- When you use or build on someone else’s ideas
- When you use or refer to someone else’s words or ideas that you found in a printed, audio-visual, or electronic source or learned through a conversation or email
- When you reproduce any chart, picture, diagram, etc.

### **When is giving credit NOT needed?**

- When stating facts that are common knowledge (information that is easily found in a general reference source like an encyclopedia or something most people probably already know.
- When recording results of an experiment that you have done.
- When you are writing your own experiences, observations, or conclusion about a topic

### **How to avoid plagiarism**

When you take notes:

- Make sure your note cards are complete and contain all the information you will need to give credit to the source later.
- **MARK EVERYTHING** – Use quotation marks around exact quotes. Mark ideas that are not your own taken from the source. If your note card contains your own thoughts, mark that.

When you paraphrase and summarize:

- When you write your paraphrase or summary, try to do it without looking at the actual words used in the source. Read the source material, make sure you understand it, and then write your notes, using your understanding of what you have just read.
- Double check your paraphrase or summary when it is written to make sure that you haven't accidentally used the same words or made a mistake in the accuracy of your content.
- If you have access to a copy machine or printer, print out the information you have found to prevent inadvertent plagiarism.

## **When in doubt, give credit to your source!\***

Sources used in this section:

“Avoiding Plagiarism.” Owl Online Writing Lab. 15 July 2002.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/plagiar.html>.

Harris, Robert A. The Plagiarism Handbook. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing, 2001.

\*See the Academic Integrity Policy in the Bayport-Blue Point Student Handbook & Code of Conduct for more information.

## **Bibliography Card Format**

- Make a resource card on a *3x5 index card* for each source of information you plan to use **BEFORE** you take any notes from it.
- Include as much information as you can **IN THE CORRECT FORMAT**. This format is the same as the one you will use in the **Bibliography at the end** of the paper. *Pay attention to punctuation, and follow the models.*

- The models on the next few pages follow the guidelines dictated in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. \* If you need more information than is listed here, consult that handbook for more details.
- If a piece of information about the resource is unavailable, simply omit it and continue with the next piece of information.

## Sample Bibliography Card

- Put the information ABOUT the resource in the middle of the lined side of the card.
- Include the call number on the upper-left corner (for books only).
- All titles of long works are underlined (books, plays, magazines, newspapers).
- All titles of short works are in quotation marks (articles, poems, short stories).

001.942  
Net

Netzley, Patricia D. The Mystery  
Library: UFOs. San Diego:  
Lucent Books, 2000

**For more information see the following books:**

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Hacker's, Diane. A Writers Reference. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Mass: St. Martin's Press, 2003.

## Sample Entries – *Books*

### Book With One Author

Last name, First name of Author. Title. Place of Publication: Publisher;  
Date of Publication.

Netzley, Patricia D, Jane Smith, and John Doe. The Mystery Library: UFOs  
San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000.

### **Book With Two or Three Authors**

Last name, First name of 1<sup>st</sup> Listed Author, First name, Last name of 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Listed Author, and First name, Last name of 3<sup>rd</sup> Listed Author.  
Title. Place of Publication: Publisher. Date of Publication.

Netzley, Patricia D, Jane Smith, and John Doe. The Mystery Library: UFOs.  
San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000.

### **Books With More than Three Authors**

Last name, First name of 1<sup>st</sup> Listed Author, et al. Title Place of Publication:  
Publisher, Date of Publication.

Netzley, Patricia D., et al. The Mystery Library: UFOs San Diego: Lucent  
Books, 2000.

### **Book With No Author**

Title. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. The Mystery  
Library: UFOs. San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000.

### **Book Written by a Company or an Organization**

Name of Company or Organization. Title. Place of Publication:  
Publisher, Date of Publication.

National Research Council. The Mystery Library: UFOs. San Diego:  
Lucent Books, 2000.

### **Book With a Translator**

Last name, First name of Author. Title. First name, Last name of  
Translator. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

Netzley, Patricia D. The Mystery Library: UFOs. Trans. John Doe.  
San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000

## **Book With an Editor**

Last name, First name of Author. Title. Ed. First name, Last name of Editor. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

Netzley, Patricia D. The Mystery Library: UFOs. Ed. Mark Smith. San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000.

## **Work in a Collection or Anthology**

Last name, First name of Author. "Title of Piece". Title of Collection or Anthology. Ed. First name, Last name of Editor. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

Netzley, Patricia D. "Roswell: Fact or Fiction." The Mystery Library: UFOs. Ed. Mark Smith. San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000.

## **Introduction, Preface, Foreword, or Afterword to a Book**

Last name, First name of Author of Piece. Type of Piece (Introduction, Preface, Foreword, or Afterword). Title of Book. By First name, Last name of Book's Author. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

Doe, Jane. Introduction. The Mystery Library: UFO's. By Patricia D. Netzley. San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000.

## **Article in an Encyclopedia or Another Reference Work**

Last name, First name of Author. "Title of Article." Title of Encyclopedia. Number of the Edition. Date of Pub.

Brown, Marsha. "The Roswell Incident." World Book Encyclopedia. 15<sup>th</sup>ed. 2002.

## **Sample entries - *Print Periodicals/Magazines***

(A periodical is a work that is published on a regular basis.)

### **Newspaper Article**

Last name, First name of Author. "Title of Article". Title of Newspaper. Day, Month, Year of Publication, Edition: Page Numbers.

Doe, John “Aliens at Roswell.” The New York Times 21 Mar. 2002.  
late ed.: 23-26.

### **Magazine Article**

Last name, First name of Author. “Title of Article.” Title of Magazine.  
Day, Month, Year of Publication: Page number (s).

Doe, John. “Aliens at Roswell.” Time 16 Mar. 2002: 23-26.

### **Article from a Scholarly Journal**

Last name, First name of Author. “Title of Article”. Title of Scholarly  
Journal. Volume Number, (Publication Year): Page Numbers.

Walsh, Mary. “UFO Sightings”. The Paranormal 667 (2001): 338-  
356.

### **Review in a Periodical**

Last name, First name of Author of Review. “Title of Review”. Rev.  
of Title of Work Being Reviewed, by First name Last name of the  
Author of the Work Being Reviewed. Title of Periodical Day Month  
Year of Publication: Page Numbers

Kline, Paul. “The Truth in Smith’s Writings.” Rev. of Alien John  
Encounters, by Smith. Time 22 Mar. 2002: 23-26.

## **Sample Entries—Internet Sources**

### **Web Site: World Wide Web**

Last name, First name of Author. “Name of Section Used”. Overall  
Title of Website. Date of Access. <Web Address (URL)>

Carter, Jane. “Aliens at Roswell.” UFO Center. 20 Dec. 2002.

<http://www.ufocenter.com/aliensatroswell>.

## **Online Book**

Last name, First name of Author. Title. Place of Publication of the Original Work: Original Publisher, Original Date of Publication. Date of Access. <Web Address (URL)>.

Netzey, Patricia D. The Mystery Library: UFOs. San Diego: Lucent Books, Access. <Web Address (URL)>.

<http://www.mysterylib.com/ufos>.

## **E-mail Communication**

Last name, First name of Author. “Title of Message from Subject Line”. Email to First name Last name of Recipient. Day, Month, Year of the Message

Mart, Susan. “Re: Alien Encounters.” E-mail to Jay Nang. 9, Sept 2002.

## **Sample Entries—Databases**

### **Article from an Online Database (SIRS, Electric Library, Proquest, etc.)**

Last name, First name of Author. “Title of Article.” Title of Magazine or News- Paper Day Month Year of Publication, Edition: Page Number(s). Date of Access. < Web Address (URL)>

“Airforce Denies ’47 UFO Recovery.” Sun-Sentinel 11 Sept. 1994: ISA. 10 July 2002 <http://skslO.sirs.com/cgi-bin/>.

Perritano, John “Roswell: What Really Happened.” Current Science 21 Jan. 2002: 12-3.”10

### **Article from an Online Encyclopedia Database**

Last name, First name of Author. "Title of Article". Title of Online Encyclopedia. Version. Date of Electronic Publication. Date of Access. <Web Address (URL)>

Smith, Kelly. "The Roswell Incident". Compton's Encyclopedia Online. Vers.2.0. 1997.30 Oct. 2002. <http://compton.ufo.com/roswell>.

### **Encyclopedia Article from a CD-ROM**

Last name, First name of Author. "Title of Article." Title of CD-ROM. CD-ROM. Year of Publication.

Jacobs, John. "Close Encounters." Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia. CD-ROM. 1998.

## **Sample Resource Entries—Miscellaneous**

### **Interview**

Last name, First name of Person Interviewed. Type of Interview (Personal Interview, Telephone interview, etc.) Day Month Year of Interview.

Tapper, Charlene. Telephone interview. 14 Apr. 2001.

### **Cartoon**

Last name, First name of Cartoonist "Title of Cartoon." Cartoon. Title of Work In Which the Cartoon was Printed Day Month Year of Publication: Page Number(s).

More, Emily. "The Roswell Secret." Cartoon. Newsday 2 July 2002:6.

**Map**

Title of Map. Map. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

New Mexico. Map. Chicago: Greenhaven Press, 2002

**Pamphlet.**

Last name, First name of Author. Title. [Pamphlet] Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

Smith, Harry. UFOs: The Reality. [Pamphlet] New York: Greenhaven Press, 2002.

**Videocassette/DVD**

Title of the Film. Dir. First name, Last name of Director. Medium (Videocassette or DVD). Distributor, Year of Release

UFO Sightings. Dir. John Smith. Videocassette. Miramax, 2000.

**Audiocassette/CD**

Last name, First name of Artist. "Title of Song;" Title of Album. Medium (Audiocassette or Compact Disc). Record Label, Year of Release.

U2. "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." The Joshua Tree. Audiocassette. Atlantic Recording Corp., 1987.

\*\*\* Remember: If a piece of information about the resource is unavailable, simply omit it and continue with the next piece of information.\*\*\*

**Note Card Format****Why Use Note Cards???**

- To carefully copy direct quotations
- To ensure that you do not plagiarize main ideas
- To make it easy to organize your paper

- Use 4X6 or 5X8 index cards. These cards will provide ample space to write and will keep them from being confused with the 3X5 bibliography cards.
- Never throw away a note card. If you feel the note card is not useful, draw a line from one corner to another and place it at the back of your pack.

### What To Include On Note Cards:

- UPPER RIGHT-HAND CORNER
  - Write the last name of the author OR, source number from your bibliography card.
  - **Write the page number(s) on which you found the information.**
  - Do not include page numbers for online sources (including web sites and online magazine and newspaper articles from electronic databases).
  - Do not put a comma between the author/title word and the source number.
- UPPER LEFT -HAND CORNER
  - Write key words or phrases to indicate the subtopic of the card.
  - Make the key words as specific as possible.
  - *Example:* If your paper is about the Alien Spacecraft at Roswell, your keywords could be “The Governments Response” or “People Who Investigated the Crash”.
- IN THE MIDDLE
  - Write only one note per card. Two topics on the same card cannot be sorted and organized efficiently. Decide on the type of note you want to take (direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary) before writing-see the next few pages for an explanation of each. Write on the front (lined) side only.
- BOTTOM RIGHT HAND CORNER
  - Always write the page number (s) on which you found the information.

Type of Note Card	When To Use It	What To Do
Direct Quotation	Only <i>every once in a while</i> when you cannot state the original better yourself. This passage would be	Copy the phrase(s) or sentence (s) Exactly and enclose the words in

<p>Paraphrases (writing the information in your own words)</p>		<p>Read the sentence(s) you wish to paraphrase.</p> <p>For a paraphrase, you must rewrite the original idea in your own words.</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>When you want to briefly summarize a long passage</p>	<p>Read the ENTIRE PASSAGE you wish to summarize.</p> <p>Then, write a one or two sentence summary of it in your own words.</p>

## Note Card Guide

### Sample Direction Quotation Note Card:

<p>Roswell UFO Discovery</p>	<p>Netzley 29</p>
<p>“On the night of July 2, there was a violent thunderstorm in the area, and rancher Maz Brazel heard a loud crash near his home. The next day while visiting his fields he discovered hundreds of small pieces of a strange material that looked like tin foil.”</p>	
<p>Pg. 393</p>	

**Sample Paraphrase Note Card:**

Roswell UFO Discovery	Netzley 29
<p>Max Brazel heard a crash on his property on the night of July 2, 1947 during a storm. He found debris that looked like little pieces of tinfoil when he inspected his fields the next day.</p>	
<p>Pg. 393</p>	

**Sample Summary Note Card:**

Netzley 29	Roswell UFO Discovery
<p>The crash at Roswell occurred on Max Brazel's property in 1947.</p>	
<p>Pg. 393</p>	

## Putting It All Together

### **Organizing Your Information**

It is now time to organize your note cards so that you can effectively use the information in your paper.

### **Arranging Your Note Cards**

- Group together note cards with similar ideas using the key words or phrases you wrote in the upper right-hand corners. Do not worry about separating cards from the same source. Make a pile of note cards that do not fit into any category.

- For each group of note cards, decide the order in which you will present the information.
- Decide the order in which you plan to present each group of information.
- Number all of the note cards in the lower left-hand corner to reflect the order in which you plan to use them in your paper. This numbering will help you should your cards accidentally become out of order.
- Realize that you may, as you are writing your paper, decide to change the order of the note cards. Additionally, you may decide NOT to use some of the note cards at all. Lastly, you may choose to insert information from your miscellaneous pile at a later time.

### **Evaluating Your Information**

Do you have enough information to adequately address the argument you introduced in your thesis statement? If so, great! If not, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I need to reword my thesis to match the information I've found (change my main idea or my position in the argument)? If so, **revise your thesis statement**.
- Do I need to find more information to completely support the argument I raised in the thesis statement? If so, **continue to collect information**. Find more resources, make a resource card for each, and take more notes.

## **Outline Your Paper!**

Now that you've selected and arranged the information you plan to use in the body paragraphs of your paper, it is time to graphically lay out your essay. Once you have completed this task, the challenging part of your project is done! The following outline organizer will help to format your paper.

### **Sample Outline Format**

I. Introduction

II. Main Idea One

- A. Subdivision
  - Detail
  - 2. Detail
- B. Subdivision
  - 1 Detail
  - 2.Detail
  - a, Sub-detail b. Sub-detail

### III Main Idea Two

- A. Subdivision
  - 1. Detail
    - a. Sub-detail b. Sub-detail
  - 2. Detail
- B. Subdivision

### IV. Main Idea Three

- A. Subdivision
- B. Subdivision
  - 1. Detail
  - 2. Detail
    - a. Sub-detail b. Sub-detail
    - c. Sub-detail

### V. Conclusion

## Writing—Introduction Paragraph

- Start with a general statement that *captures the reader's attention*. This sentence should not deal with your specific topic, but it should relate to it.
- Narrow down to your specific topic through the use of several sentences.
- End the paragraph with your **thesis statement**. This sentence should clearly introduce the specific aspect(s) of your topic that you intend to prove in your paper.
- Do not include any details or researched information in this paragraph.

### Sample:

- Main Ideas in the Sample Paper

- An alien spacecraft DID crash in Roswell, New Mexico in 1947.
- This incident proves that there is intelligent life other than humans in the universe.
- The government has been trying to cover up the Roswell incident.

## Sample Introduction Paragraph For This Paper

*Throughout time, humans have wondered if there is intelligent life on other planets. In the last half-century, we have spent huge sums of money and time in creating and operating spacecraft that travel to the moon in search of life. More recently, humans have been developing technology that will allow us to travel to other planets to determine if another species of intelligent life exists in our solar system. However, all of these efforts to discover an alien species are unnecessary; we need only look in our own backyard to verify that an alien species exists. The Roswell incident, in which an alien spacecraft crashed on a farm in New Mexico in 1947, is adequate proof that intelligent life outside Earth does exist; however, there is substantial evidence that the government has been trying to cover up the discovery.*

## Writing Body Paragraphs

### First Sentence

- Always start with a topic sentence that clearly states the main idea of the paragraph.
- This sentence should include a transition to connect this paragraph with the previous one. Transitions include: *First, Next, Another...*, *On the other hand, Similarly, In contrast, Although...*, *Therefore, However, In addition to...*, *Nevertheless*.

### Sentences in the Middle

- This is the section of the paragraph in which you give your **details** and your evidence to support your main idea. *This is where your notes are used, but your own words and ideas should be included in addition to your researched information.*
- Each sentence should relate to the main idea expressed in the topic sentence.

## Last Sentence

- If this sentence does not relate to the thesis statement (the last sentence of the introduction paragraph), you need to reevaluate the relevance of your body paragraph.

## Writing –Conclusion Paragraph

- Restate the thesis statement in a new way.
- Use a sentence to sum up each main idea of the paper.
- End with a general or philosophical statement.

## Sample:

*Several things about the incident at Roswell in 1947 are obvious. First, it is clear that some flying object crashed onto Max Brazel's property, leaving strange debris. One can also be certain that the government collected the material from the crash and investigated it at Fort Worth. Although the government claims that it was not....*

# Typing Your Paper

## Title Page Format

If your teacher requires a title page follow the format below.

- The title should reflect your thesis statement.
- Center your title approximately halfway down from the top of the page (approximately 24 lines).
- Center and double-space your name, the course, the teacher's name, the period, and the date at the bottom of the page.
- Type the title and other information with both capital and small letters, not with all capitals. Be sure that all major words are capitalized. Do not use bold lettering.
- Do not use quotation marks or underlining in your title unless you are including the specific name of a published work.
- The title page is not numbered as part of your paper.

## Page 1,2,3...

- Always use a standard, easily readable font.
- Align your lines to the left. Do not center or right justify your text.
- Except for page headers, leave margins of one inch at the top, bottom, and on both sides of the text.
- Indent the first word of a paragraph one-half inch (or five spaces) from the left margin.
- Indent set-off quotations one inch from the left margin.
- Double-space your essay throughout, including quotations and the Bibliography.
- A page header on each page should include your last name and the page number. **DO NOT COUNT THE TITLE PAGE FOR PAGE NUMBERING.** The page header should be located in the upper-right and corner, one-half inch from the top, and flush with the right margin.
- Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the parts of the text to which they relate.

## Bibliography Format

### **Before you start typing:**

- Make sure that you have a resource card for each source you have used.
- Alphabetize your resource cards by the author's last name or the first major word in the title if there is no author.
- The format used on your resource cards is the same format that you should use for your list of works cited.

### **When typing:**

- Leave one-inch margins on all four borders.
- Include a page header in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top, and flush with the right margin.
- **Do NOT** number your entries.
- **Do NOT** include call numbers of books.
- Double-space the entire page.

- Indent the second line of each entry 6 spaces (use your tab).
- Substitute 3 hyphens followed by a period and 2 spaces for more than 1 entry by the same author.
- Use page numbers **WITHOUT** p., pgs., or pp.
- Be sure to underline titles of all long works (books, plays, names of magazines and newspapers, etc.)
- Titles of all short works (poems, short stories, articles, songs, etc.) should be in quotation marks.

## *Bibliography Samples*

### TYPE

### WORKS CITED

Book, 1 author

Manchester, William. *The Death of a President*. New York: Harper and row, 1967

Book, 3 or more authors

Madden, John R., et al. *Practical Politics and Government In the United States*. New York: MacMillan, 1976

Book, one editor

White, David Manning, Ed. *Pop Culture in America*. Chicago Quadrangle Books, 1970.

Selection from collection of essays, collections of articles, anthology

Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal". The Portable Swift. Ed. Carl Van Doran. New York: The Viking Press, 1948. pp. 535-548

Reference book

Young, Charles. "Hawthorne's Gothicism" In *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 15, 1059. Ed. Harvey Winter, New York: Harper and Row,

	1975.
Play in a collection	Shakespeare, William. <i>Macbeth</i> . William Shakespeare the Complete Works. Ed. Alfred Harbage. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969 pp. 1050-1080.
Encyclopedia article	Romans, Robert C. "Acacia". <i>Academic American Encyclopedia</i> . 1 <sup>st</sup> ed. 1989
Magazine, signed article	Baumgold, Julie. "The Bachelor Billionaire." <i>New Yorker</i> 5 August 1985: pp.28-37.
Magazine, unsigned article	"Synfuels Go Into Death Throes." <i>U.S. News and World Report</i> 12 August 1985: 15-16
Pamphlet, organization	<i>Bicycle Touring In Vermont</i> . Pamphlet. Montpelier: Vermont Recreation and Part Society.
Computer Database	Schomer, Howard. "South Africa: Beyond Fair Employment." <i>Harvard Business Review</i> May-June 1983.
Web address	Author's name. Company name. "Title of Web Page". Copyright Date. Pages used. Last date updated.
Computer software (CD-ROM) Computer	Tarper, Michael and Ronald Howard. <i>Cinematic Software</i> . Micropart, 1989.
Reference book	Young, Charles. "Hawthorne's Gothicism". In <i>Contemporary Literary Criticism</i> . Vol. 15, 1059. Ed Harvey Winter, New York: Harper and Row, 1975
Web Address	145. Dialog file 122, item 119425 833160 Author's name. Company name. "Title of Web Page". Copyright Date. Pages used. Last Date Updated.

(If you need additional help in writing your bibliography try [www.EASYBIB.COM](http://www.EASYBIB.COM))

# Evaluating What You Have Done

## Checklist Content

### Introduction Paragraph:

- Starts with general statement?
- Includes several sentences that connect general statement to thesis statement?
- Ends with thesis statement...
  - States your position and takes a stand?
  - Expresses one and only one main idea?
  - Uses specific language?
  - Avoids including details and researched information?

### Body Paragraphs:

- Start with topic sentence?
- All sentences in paragraph relate to topic sentence?
- Include researched information...
- Use direct quotations sparingly?
- Avoid stringing together researched information (one after another)?
- Include author's last name (or title word) and page number (if available) for each direct quotation AND idea that is not your own?
- Have a resource entry on the List of Works Cited page for each source used?
- End with return sentence?

### Conclusion Paragraph:

- Rephrases thesis statement?
- Sums up all main ideas?
- Ends with philosophical statement?

### Overall:

- Correct grammar, usage, and spelling?
- Transition words or phrases within and between paragraphs?

## Checklist-Format

### Overall:

- One-inch margins on all sides?
- Double spaced?
- Page header on each page, including last name and page number?
- Two spaces after each period, question mark, and exclamation mark?
- One space after commas, colons, and semi-colons?
- Underlined titles of long works (plays, magazines, newspapers, books, etc.)?
- Quotation marks around titles of short works (articles, poems, songs, short stories)?

### Title Page:

- Follows the model for spacing and formatting?
- Title interesting and reflective of topic?
- All major words of title capitalized?
- No underlining or quoting title unless including a title of a published work?
- Essay Pages (actual paper):
- Indent one tab (about 5 spaces) for each new paragraph?
- Place period AFTER parentheses when giving credit to source?

### Bibliography Page:

- Follows the model for spacing and formatting?
- Each entry in alphabetical order according to the first word?
- Entries unnumbered?
- Indent one tab (about 5 spaces) for every line after the first entry?
- No *page*, *pages*, *p.*, *pp.* or *pgs.* when indicating page number?

### **Any Questions?**

- Ask your teacher or librarian.
- Check the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (in print or online).

- Go to <http://owl.English.Purdue.Edu/Handouts/Research/MLA.HTML>.

Thanks to Deborah Wallace and Jennifer Kelly of Hauppauge High School Library  
for permission to use their Student Handbook for Research  
and  
To the English Department of BBPHS for their suggestions and proof reading.