

Name _____ Date _____

How To Write a Research Paper

Developed by: Katie Manning, Irmo Middle School

Step 1: Planning

Determine your research topic and questions. Pick a topic you are really interested in and think of five or six broad questions you could ask about the topic. You want for your questions to have many answers. For example, you wouldn't want a research question to be: "When was Hitler born?" That is too specific. Instead you could ask a question like: "How did Hitler's childhood influence the choices he made as a leader?" With a broad question like this, you could include information about when he was born, his family life as a child, and his interests as he was growing up. The best questions to ask often begin with the words "how," "why," and "what."

Research Topic: _____

Research Questions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Step 2: Getting Information

Your goal is to use RELIABLE sources of information to find answers to the research questions you have posed. Reliable sources would be DISCUS, library books, and Internet websites with a .org or .edu address. Unreliable sources include Wikipedia, ask.com, answers.com and any website whose author is not listed. You may directly quote a source (see example that follows) or paraphrase from a source. Your entire paper cannot be a direct quote. That is PLAIGIARISM! ☺

PARAPHRASING:

The best way to paraphrase information from a source is to read the information to yourself. Then look away from the source (turn the computer screen off if you have to) and try to retell what you have just read. Think of it like a good piece of gossip you have just heard. You want to tell your best friend, and although you may not remember the exact wording of the rumor, you definitely recall the gist of what was being said. Paraphrasing for a paper is the exact same thing. In fact, you DON'T WANT to remember the exact wording of what you read, just the main idea!

For example, this could be the text off of the Internet or out of a book:

“The rules varied from SS guard to SS guard. For example, prisoners were supposed to report for roll call ‘properly dressed.’ Some SS might punish those appearing without a cap with a beating. Others would shoot the ‘improperly dressed’ prisoner. A standard punishment was 25 lashes of a whip or stick. However, many SS men made the prisoners count the 25 lashes themselves, in German. If the prisoner lost count they had to go back to the beginning. Many prisoners could not speak any German before they arrive in the camps.”

Taken from: Shuter, Jane. The Holocaust: The Camp System. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2003.

Now if I were going to paraphrase this paragraph, I could say:

Prisoners in the concentration camps had to be dressed a certain way. If someone was not dressed correctly, they could receive a beating, a lashing or could be shot to death. Sometimes when a prisoner was whipped, they would have to count the lashes in German. However, if a mistake was made when counting, the guard would begin the punishment over again.

DIRECT QUOTES

Sometimes you will read something that is so fantastic, you may not be able to put it in your own words in a better way. This is a time when you might want to use a direct quote. Depending on the topic you are writing about, you may want to give a direct quote from an expert on the topic. Or if you are researching a person, you might want to directly quote something the individual said.

- ❖ REMEMBER: You are not an expert on any topic in history. You may know something about it, but you are not an expert. Therefore, you MUST write down your sources of information. Almost everything in your paper should be cited!

In order to correctly cite your sources, refer to the MLA citation sheet in your research packet. You can also use www.easybib.com to help with citations. This is a great resource to use, especially for electronic sources.

Example of direct quote:

One German officer told of the gassing at Belzec death camp. He said, "They leave their baggage, undress, have their heads shaved, then go into the death chambers. They pack them in 700-800 in a chamber. The engine finally starts and after 32 minutes they are dead" (Shuter 2003).

Step 3: Recording Information on Your Index Cards

Your index cards are where you are going to record the information that in some way answers one of the research questions you have posed. Although there is no set number of notecards that you need, in general you should have a MINIMUM of 3-4 for each question. However, the more notecards of information you have, the easier it is to write your paper!

On each notecard, it is better to write no more than 1-3 sentences worth of information. If you have more information than that, you should begin a new notecard. Your notecard is also a place to record the research question you are addressing, and the source of the information. The better your notecards, the simpler the writing of the research paper becomes!

For example:



Research Question

What was daily life in a German concentration camp?

Camp prisoners were given only one meal a day in camps. Usually this meal was a bowl of soup with spoiled meat or rotten vegetables in it.

The Auschwitz Museum. www.auschwitz.org/dailylife. Retrieved on March 3, 2012.

Source of Information

Information I want to include in my paper

Research Question

What was daily life in a German concentration camp?

Prisoners worked for 12 hours a day, with two 15 minute breaks for rest. Work consisted of laboring in nearby factories creating goods for the German war effort, working in fields raising food for the Germany army, or cutting down trees to be used in the building of bridges or railroads.

Walters, Ken. The Holocaust: A Guide. New York: Harcourt, 2001, 20.

Source of Information

Information I want to include in my paper

Page number you found the information on in a book.

Research Question

What was daily life in a German concentration camp?

One Jewish teenager who worked at Dacchau camp said, "Even though I was grateful to still be alive, sometimes it was difficult to wake up in the morning knowing the grueling work that was expected and the overpowering sense of hunger and exhaustion I felt."

Briar, Judy. "Survivor's Stories." Encyclopedia of World History. 2009, 109.

Source of Information

Information I want to include in my paper

Page number you found the information on in a book.

Research Question

What was daily life in a German concentration camp?

Prisoners lived in barracks in the camps. Because the barracks were overcrowded, people had no personal space. Prisoners slept side by side other prisoners on "bunk-bed like" structures. Due to the closeness to other people, diseases and other sicknesses spread quickly in the camps.

U.S. Holocaust Museum. www.ushoocaustmuseum.org/camps. Retrieved on March 2, 2012.

Source of Information

Information I want to include in my paper

Research Question

What was daily life in a German concentration camp?

The prisoners tried to keep their spirits up while in the camps. They continued to worship in secret and quietly celebrated the camaraderie of captivity with fellow prisoners.

The Holocaust Foundation. www.holocaust.org/lifeincamp. Retrieved on March 1 2012.

Source of Information

Information I want to include in my paper

- ❖ REMEMBER: For 3 research questions, your goal is to write 4-5 cards per question for a minimum of 15 cards. Remember, the better your cards, the easier your paper will be to write!!!

Step 4: Organizing Your Index Cards

Once your index cards are completed, you need to get organized. First, sort your note cards into groups by research questions. Second, look at your research questions. You need to put them in an order that would make sense to the reader. For example, you may choose to use chronological order or cause and effect. Chronological order refers to time. If you are writing a research paper on Hitler, it wouldn't make sense to write about his death before you have written about the way his childhood affected his decisions as he became the leader of Germany. Pretend the topic for your research is Pearl Harbor and your research questions are as follows:

1. What effects did the bombing of Pearl Harbor have on the U.S. after December 7?
2. Why did the Japanese choose to attack the U.S.?
3. How many people (soldiers and civilians) were killed at Pearl Harbor?
4. What strategy did the Japanese use in attacking Pearl Harbor?
5. How had the U.S. prepared for a Japanese attack?

A logical way to organize these so that the progression of events in the story makes sense is:

1. Why did the Japanese choose to attack the U.S.?
2. How had the U.S. prepared for a Japanese attack?
3. What strategy did the Japanese use in attacking Pearl Harbor?

4. How many people (soldiers and civilians) were killed at Pearl Harbor?
5. What effects did the bombing of Pearl Harbor have on the U.S. after December 7?

Getting your questions in an order that makes sense is crucial because this is the order the audience will be reading your paper! Once your research questions are in order, you need to sort the cards within each question. The best way to do this is to read each card. Ask yourself, "Where would this best fit in a paragraph after my topic sentence?" For example, look at my sample index cards with information on the research question, "What was daily life like in a German concentration camp?" This is the best possible way to order my cards so that the information would flow in a paragraph.

1. Prisoners lived in barracks in the camps. Because the barracks were overcrowded, people had no personal space and slept side by side other prisoners on "bunk-bed like" structures. Due to the closeness to other people, diseases and other sicknesses spread quickly in the camps.
2. Prisoners worked for 12 hours a day, with two 15 minute breaks for rest. Work consisted of working in nearby factories creating goods for the German war effort, working in fields raising food for the Army, or cutting down trees to be used in the building of bridges and railroads.
3. Camp prisoners were given only one meal a day in camps. Usually this meal was a bowl of soup with spoiled meat or rotten vegetables in it.
4. One Jewish teenager who worked at Dachau camp said, "Even though I was grateful to still be alive, sometimes it was difficult to wake up in the morning knowing the grueling work that was expected and the overpowering sense of hunger and exhaustion I felt."
5. People living in the concentration camps lived in constant dread of being beaten by German guards. They also feared being unexpectedly killed by the guards.
6. The prisoners tried to keep their spirits up while in the camps. They continued to worship in secret and quietly celebrated the camaraderie of captivity with fellow prisoners.

Step 5: Turn Your Research Questions Into Topic Sentences

Sometimes starting a paragraph or coming up with a topic sentence can really stump the brain in writing. However, an easy way to come up with a topic sentence is to change your research question into a statement. Consider the following research question: "What was daily life like for prisoners in the concentration camps?" I could make this a topic sentence by saying: "Daily life in the concentration camps was difficult for prisoners." Maybe your question is this: "How did Hitler's childhood influence Hitler's decision as a leader?" My topic sentence could be: "Hitler's childhood influenced Hitler's decision as a leader in many ways." Let's try one more. If my research question was the following: "Why was the development of the atomic bomb a

huge secret?" My topic sentence could be: "The development of the atomic bomb was a huge secret for several reasons."

Step 6: Writing the Body of Your Research Paper

Now that you know how to write topic sentences and you have your index cards in an order that makes sense, you are ready to write the body of your paper. All you need to do is get your first research question, create a topic sentence from it, and then add your information from your cards in the order that makes sense. If your paragraph is more than 4-6 sentences, consider dividing the information from that research topic into two paragraphs. You may not need to write a new topic sentence for each paragraph. You only need a new topic sentence when you have moved on to a new research question in the body of your paper. You may need to add some transition words between your sentences to help it flow better, such as the following: however, meanwhile, at the same time, on the other hand, etc.

WARNING: You will need to cite your material after you have written the information from each card. To do this in the body of your paper, you will shorten your citation. You will place the shortened citation in parenthesis AFTER your sentence but BEFORE the period. If the information is from a book, you need to include the author's last name and the page number in the book where you found the information. If it is from a website, you need to put the name of the website (not the web address) or the author's last name if the website tells you the author's name. *You should cite information in your paper once you have finished copying the information off of each index card.*

- Ex. The prisoners tried to keep their spirits up while in the camps. They continued to worship in secret and quietly celebrated the camaraderie of captivity with fellow prisoners (Holocaust Foundation).
- Ex. One Jewish teenager who worked at Dacchau camp said, "Even though I was grateful to still be alive, sometimes it was difficult to wake up in the morning knowing the grueling work that was expected and the overpowering sense of hunger and exhaustion I felt" (Briar 109).
- Ex. Prisoners worked for 12 hours a day, with two 15 minute breaks for rest. Work consisted of laboring in nearby factories creating goods for the German war effort, working in fields raising food for the Germany army, or cutting down trees to be used in the building of bridges or railroads (Walters 20).

You will need the FULL citation for your bibliography so DO NOT lose your notecards as you go. A bibliography is simply an alphabetical list of the sources you used. Use the first word of your citation as a guide to putting the list in ABC order (more on this in Step 9).

Step 7: Writing Your Introduction and Conclusion

Think about when you meet new people. You give your name, and generally you give some brief information about yourself, or maybe tell something interesting about yourself. The introduction to your paper works the same way. It is simply an introduction to the topic you researched. You want for people to be interested in reading about your topic, so you ought to include a “hook,” or an interesting fact to get their attention. You also want to give basic, very general information about your topic. This is NOT the time to get into detailed information.

NOTE: Never use 1st person (I, me, we, mine) in a research paper. You should always use 3rd person.

Look at the sample introduction for a research paper about the Holocaust:

At various times in world history, leaders have come to power who have mistreated groups of people they rule. One of the most notorious examples was when Hitler came to power in Germany and tried to eliminate all of the Jew and various other ethnic groups he did not like. This event, which killed over 11,000,000 people in Europe, was known as the Holocaust (The Holocaust Museum).

Your conclusion should restate the main points in your research paper. You are simply summarizing your paper. Look at the sample conclusion for a research paper about the Holocaust:

The Holocaust was a frightening time for many Jews and other ethnic groups in Europe. The physical, mental, and emotional devastation that resulted from Hitler’s own deep hatred was horrific. While the Jews vow to never forget the atrocities done to them, hopefully individuals world-wide can learn valuable lessons from the Holocaust so that history will not repeat itself.

The goal for both your introduction and conclusion is to be 4-5 sentences each. However, 3 sentences is the minimum that is acceptable.

Step 8: Revise and Edit

You need to revise and edit your grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This is two separate steps! Revising means you are changing the words or wording in your writing. Editing checks for mistakes with verb tenses, spelling, and punctuation.

- ❖ REMEMBER: You are writing a paper about something in the past, so you will most likely need to use the past tense for the majority of your paper!

Step 9: Final Copy

You are almost finished! Now you need to type your final copy of the research paper. Make sure your final copy follows these guidelines:

1. Size 12 font.

2. Font style is Calibri or Times New Roman.
3. Paper is double-spaced between the lines. (To do this in a Word Document, click on the icon at the top of this page that has an arrow pointing up and an arrow pointing down – near the center of the computer screen. Click on this and choose 2.0).
4. Cover page with the title of the paper, your name, date, and class period on it. You may use any font or size you desire, and you may add a picture if you like.
5. Paper has page numbers. The page numbers should start on the first page of your paper, not the cover page. (To do this in a Word Document, go to insert, click on page number, select where you want your page number to be located. Then, click on page number again and select Format Page Number. Click on Start At, and put 2 for page 2.)
6. Include a bibliography. Remember, this is an alphabetical list of the references you used. Use the author’s last name to alphabetize the list. If your source doesn’t provide an author’s name, use the name of the website – NOT the web address. Your bibliography needs to have a hanging indent. (To do this in a Word Document, you need to type your information for your source, hi-light the information, and the right click on it. Select paragraph, special, and then hanging.) You should double space between each source. See the sample below.

- ❖ **NOTE:** A great resource for creating your bibliography is www.easybib.com. This website will create the alphabetized bibliography for you when you type in the information for your source. You can then copy and paste the bibliography from this website, or print it as a Word Document from the website.

Sample Bibliography

Burns, James. John Kennedy: A Political Profile. New York: Harcourt, 1959.

Weber, Mark. “Jewish Soap.” Institute for Historical Review. Available <http://www.webcom.com/exundel/english/incorr/incorrect.007.html>. Retrieved on March 2, 2010.

- ❖ You must include your rough draft after your Bibliography. These pages do NOT need to be typed and the pages do NOT need to be numbered. The purpose of including the rough draft is so that I can see that you made an effort to revise and edit your paper. Your rough draft should provide evidence of the corrections that you intended to make in your final draft.

Research Paper Rubric

RUBRIC CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Organization	Information is very organized with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings.	Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs.	Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well-constructed.	The information appears to be disorganized. 8)
Amount of Information	All topics are addressed and all questions answered with at least 3 sentences about each.	All topics are addressed and most questions answered with at least 2 sentences about each.	All topics are addressed, and most questions answered with 1 sentence about each.	One or more topics were not addressed.
Quality of Information	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.
Sources	All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented in the desired format.	All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented, but a few are not in the desired format.	All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented, but many are not in the desired format.	Some sources are not accurately documented.
Mechanics	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors	A few grammatical spelling, or punctuation errors.	Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.
Paper Components	Research paper includes a cover page, body of the paper, bibliography, and a rough draft.	Research paper is missing one of the following: a cover page, body of the paper, bibliography, and a rough draft.	Research paper is missing two of the following: a cover page, body of the paper, bibliography, and a rough draft.	Research paper is missing three or more of the following: a cover page, body of the paper, bibliography, and a rough draft.

Rubric Score _____ x 4 + 4 (research paper folder/cover) _____/100 points