



Research Papers

This overview of research paper strategies will focus on the type of research paper that uses library resources.

The research paper is a popular academic assignment. Forms of it are also used in various professional fields. The research paper gives you the opportunity to think seriously about some issue. Building on the research of others, you have the opportunity to contribute your own research and insights to a particular question of interest to you. It also gives you practice in important academic skills such as:

- formulating research questions
- conducting research
- managing time
- organizing information into coherent ideas
- substantiating arguments with research in the field
- presenting insights about the research

Disciplines vary in their ways of conducting research, in writing research papers, and in the form of the final copy. Go to this site to view sample papers in the four major styles. <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/index.htm>

Individual instructors may also vary in their expectations of a research paper. It is important that you **read the assignment carefully**. Writing a research paper can be a very messy and fluid process, and the following is only a representation of commonly used steps.

- Start by choosing a topic.
- Then narrow that topic. See [Narrow your Topic](#).
- Draft a thesis statement (which may easily change as you do the research). See [Thesis Statements](#)
- Do the research. See [Doing Research, Evaluating Sources](#) and [Primary vs. Secondary Sources](#)
 - Notes, summaries, paraphrases and quotes with citations. See [Paraphrase and Summary](#)
- Organize the research. (Outlining can really help at this point) See [Outlines](#)
- Draft See [The Writing Process](#)
- Create your Works Cited page. See [Bibliographies](#)
- Revise See [Revising](#)
- Edit and Proofread See [Editing and Proofreading](#)

Two major types of research papers

Argumentative research paper:

The argumentative research paper consists of an introduction in which the writer clearly introduces the topic and informs his audience exactly which stance he intends to take; this stance is often identified as the [thesis statement](#). An important goal of the argumentative research paper is persuasion, which means the topic chosen should be debatable or controversial.



The student would support the thesis throughout the paper by means of both primary and secondary sources, with the intent to persuade the audience that the interpretation of the situation is viable.

Analytical research paper:

The analytical research paper often begins with the student asking a question (a.k.a. a research question) on which he has taken no stance. Such a paper is often an exercise in exploration and evaluation.

It is not the student's intent to persuade the audience that his ideas are right while those of others are wrong. Instead, his goal is to offer a critical interpretation of primary and secondary sources throughout the paper--sources that should, ultimately, buttress his particular analysis of the topic.

It is typically not until the student has begun the writing process that his thesis statement begins to take solid form. In fact, the thesis statement in an analytical paper is often more fluid than the thesis in an argumentative paper. Such is one of the benefits of approaching the topic without a predetermined stance¹.

For more help [Make an Appointment!](#)

Rev 7/11.

¹ Adapted from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/02/>