



Research Paper & Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation Guide

Compiled by the **Instructional Resource Center** of
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INTRODUCTION

You are about to embark upon an amazing process of discovery! You will learn much about the research process, yes, but you will learn even more about yourself and our Lord who made you and brought you here! This may be your first semester at Somerset Christian College, in which case we would like to welcome you. We pray that your experience here is richly rewarding. If you are a returning student, again, we say welcome! We're so glad you've returned! In either case, you probably already know that much of your work here at the college involves writing papers. This guide is designed to answer many of the questions most frequently asked by students. Full instruction in the writing of essays and of research papers comes in Composition I and Composition II; however, this guide will help you if you have not yet had the classes or if you have been out of school for awhile.

WHAT IS A RESEARCH PAPER?

A research paper comes in two modes. The first is the **Informative Report**. This type of research seeks to describe, explain, or analyze a specific aspect of a subject. It assimilates and focuses material in an original way in order to offer a new perspective on the topic. The second mode is the **Researched Argument**. This attempts to persuade the reader to accept an original argument. It uses evidence from various sources to formulate and then to support a judgment. In either case, in planning your research paper, it is essential to first define your purpose. Having done that, you then select outside sources to support your assertions. Outside (secondary) sources are articles or books published about your topic. A research paper is primarily *your* work and ideas and words with quotes and paraphrases added from other writers to support *your* ideas. Your paper will be unique because every researcher brings to bear his or her talents as a thinker and an investigator. The more critically you have thought about your subject, the more creative your paper will be. (To get an overall view of what a research paper involves, see the Graphic Organizer in Section Eight of this guide.)



SECTION ONE: CHOOSE A TOPIC

Once you know you must write a research paper, it is a good idea to choose a topic as soon as possible. Some instructors may assign your topic. If you are free to choose, however, you should first clarify with your instructor exactly what he or she expects. Make sure you understand the assignment. You can then begin finding areas of the subject matter that interest you.

Choose a topic that appeals to you. It is twice as difficult to write about something that does not interest you. Skim the contents page and look through the chapters in the textbook, talk to other students, talk to your instructor, or browse through books and magazines to discover areas you can research.

Once you have some general idea of a topic, you can begin to narrow it. Take a large topic like "Education" and narrow it to "Education for Women". Narrow it further to draw closer to your thesis statement: "Higher Education for Women", then "Higher Education for Women in the Nineteenth Century", and

finally “Attitude toward Higher Education for Women in the 1890’s”. Take that narrowed topic and create a specific viewpoint which will become your thesis. Your thesis will sharpen the focus of your research and will greatly reduce your workload if you confine your topic to a specific area. *Spend a great deal of time getting your thesis right and you can't go wrong!*

You may find you cannot narrow your topic because you don't know enough about it. In that case, start browsing through reading material and see what aspects of those readings appeal to you. If the topic still doesn't work, abandon it and find another.

Your last step in choosing a topic is to *discuss your choice with your instructor*. It is better to make sure you are doing the assignment correctly before you begin than to realize after you have nearly completed the paper that your instructor wanted something else!

SECTION TWO: COLLECT INFORMATION

You have several options when it comes to finding sources about your topic in the SCC library. Be sure to check with your librarian regarding all of the resources available by way of hard copy, electronic sources, or interlibrary loans. The Arthur K. White Library has excellent Biblical and Theological collections, Professional Ministries, and General Education materials. Call 732-356-6240 or check the Website at <http://akw.library.net> for assistance.

You may check the reference books in the front of the library. The SCC library has a variety of reference materials covering many topics and fields of study. For instance, find your topic in an encyclopedia. You will probably find a list of additional resources at the end of each entry. Use this list to point you to

other research. Keep in mind, however, that a reference book is only a starting place.

You may want to check our Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), which can be accessed from any location. Simply click onto the library home page. Go to Search the Library Catalog and follow the prompts. This computer system provides you with information about all the books available at the SCC library. Try searching by topic, author's last name, or book title. Once you have found some books, check the bibliographies often contained in them for further sources.

A third place to check is the OCLC and Online Databases. OCLC First Search is a web-based information system of over 80 databases. EBSCO Academic Abstracts is a searchable full text for 480 journals, and abstracts for 950 publications. (If you need to find literary criticism, see Section Eight of this guide.)

Students often find it beneficial to search the Internet for sources. The Internet has a wealth of easily accessible information about virtually any topic. The AKW Library has six computers available to students where they can access Internet Explorer, Microsoft Word and Excel. Additional software such as Encarta, the NIV Study Bible, New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, the Essential IVP Reference Collection, Master Christian Library, and Reformation History Library are available on four of the computers. The IRC tutoring center also has one computer available for student use.

If you need an article or book that is not available at SCC, ask the librarian about Interlibrary Loans. Interlibrary loans allow students to borrow books from other libraries. It is a simple procedure of identifying information you need,

filling out the appropriate form and handing it to the librarian. The exchange is made twice a week.

SECTION THREE: ORGANIZE YOUR MATERIAL

In your English classes you will learn about prewriting. If you are unfamiliar with prewriting techniques, check with the IRC tutor. Once you feel comfortable with your topic, you need to organize your notes. First, take notes from all of your major sources, that is, all of those that you initially expected to be important sources of information on your topic, either because their titles seemed particularly promising or because you had already skimmed through them. As already noted, you should complete this stage of the research process with a reasonably sure sense that your subject is in some way going to provide the basis for a successful paper.

Next, you need to make connections. When the same topics surface again and again, you will begin to see connections among your note cards for the first time. Source Y, for example, has an opinion different from that of source X; source B confirms a point made by source A. Recognizing such connections is a good sign that you are mastering your subject. At about this time, you will realize that you have developed ideas of your own. The best researchers are most interested in how the research helps support their thesis. You may gradually begin to develop a vague mental outline of some of the key ideas you think the paper should cover. It's time to retire from the library for a while and try writing your paper!

Third, organize your notes. Review and sort them, collecting notes from different sources that explain, comment on, or give evidence for some specific points. If you have put your notes on separate cards or slips of paper, this will be easy to do.

Fourth, compose a tentative outline. This step is crucial in that it will save you time later. Decide how you want your paper to develop; look at the type of paper you are writing, consider the effect you want to have on the reader, and decide on the most effective, appropriate organization. Break your ideas into main categories and sub-categories and write them in some type of outline format. If you are unsure as to how to organize your papers, ask the IRC tutor or your English professor for assistance.

SECTION FOUR: WRITE THE FIRST DRAFT

Once you have found a topic, identified a thesis, done the research and taken copious notes, and outlined some basic ideas for the paper, you can begin putting together a rough draft of your paper.

One of the more difficult aspects of writing a research paper is not allowing words from books and articles you have read to overpower your own words. Remember: This is YOUR paper made up of your ideas and words. If you have difficulty bringing your own voice into your paper, you might want to begin writing the paper based solely on what you already know about your topic. Write a draft before you have done any serious research. This will allow you to keep your mind free of other people's ideas and will guarantee that the core of your paper is in fact your own. You may feel that you cannot begin writing because you know so little about your topic. Do what you can and then turn to research. If you do this, it will be perfectly clear which ideas are yours. Please check Sac's plagiarism policy. If you fail to distinguish between your own

words and thoughts and those of your sources, you mislead your reader into assuming that everything in the paper is your own work. Passing off the language or ideas of someone else is theft: it is a serious violation known as plagiarism.

The paper must have an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction is extremely general, leading to your thesis. Many writers find their thesis statement may change as the paper evolves. This is called a *working thesis* and is perfectly acceptable. However, eventually, you must locate your proper thesis because anything you mention in the body of the paper must be included in your thesis statement.

The body of the paper contains all the support for your thesis statement. It should be clearly organized into paragraphs of appropriate length. Generally main points receive three or four supporting points of evidence. All of your supporting points come from your own knowledge of the topic or from quotes or paraphrases you take from secondary sources.

The conclusion wraps up your ideas. It is important to remind your reader of your main idea without becoming repetitious.

Many students discover that it is easier to write the body paragraphs before they attempt the introduction. If you have organized your notes well, you should have a pretty clear idea of how the paper will be organized. Therefore, you may first want to begin drafting the portion of the paper you find most intriguing and compose the introduction at a later time.

SECTION FIVE: REVISE

After completing a first draft, set the paper aside for a short while. Let your mind forget what you have written. When you think enough time has gone by (usually a few days), reread your paper.

Revision means checking your paper for errors. Start with the higher level concerns, like clarity of your main idea, and move to lower level concerns, like spelling. If additional revision is necessary, ask someone to read your paper for you. Others will be able to read your work and view it with a fresh eye. Their comments will help you make any necessary changes to your paper before you turn it in for a grade. Be sure the reader is someone who is knowledgeable about English grammar and is thorough because any errors you leave in your final draft will make a bad impression on your reader. It is your job to make sure your paper is as correct and effective as it can be.



The writing process is recursive rather than linear: that is, it is a process in which the stages are often cyclical rather than sequential. You can avoid some of the frustration of doing research by preparing for the fact that composing a research paper inevitably involves backtracking: abandoning an unworkable subject and beginning anew; discarding notes that prove worthless and searching for better ones; rethinking your paper's focus again and again; and

returning to the library, even after you have begun writing the paper, to verify a quotation or to look for just one more source. Give yourself plenty of time to allow the process to work. When you feel you are drowning in paper, you'll know that you have become a true researcher at last. Congratulations!!!

SECTION SIX: FORMAT YOUR PAPER

SCC uses the Modern Language Associate Style Guide (MLA) as the default format for all formal papers at the college. However, when you get ready to format your paper, check with your instructor to find out his or her preferences.

MLA Format:

Use only white, 8½ inch by 11-inch paper of good quality (20 lb). Do not submit work typed on erasable paper, which smudges easily. Except for page numbers, leave margins of one inch at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text. (If you are using Microsoft Word®, it will automatically create 1" margins.) Indent the first word of a paragraph one-half inch (five spaces) from the left margin. Indent set-off quotations one inch (ten spaces) from the left margin. A research paper must be **double-spaced** throughout, including quotations, notes, and the list of works cited. The research paper does not need a title page. Instead, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date on separate lines, double-spacing throughout. Double-space again and center the title. Double-space again, indent 5 spaces and you are ready to begin the text of your paper. (If you have difficulty formatting your paper, contact the IRC.) See Section Seven of this guide for a sample first page.

Note:

- Most instructors expect the research paper to be typed. Use one-inch margins on the top, bottom, and each side of the page. Type on one side only of each page. Avoid making letters a size any larger than 12 point.
- Some instructors prefer separate cover pages. Ask if he or she would like the document stapled or gathered by a clip.
- Some instructors may ask you to include prewriting, outlines, rough drafts, or other evidence of your writing process. Ask your instructor what he or she wants you to submit.
- All papers should have a title that indicates the topic of the paper.
- The works cited or reference page should be a separate page and should appear last.
- Some instructors may require that you include copies of the articles you used as sources.
- Some instructors may prefer that you submit your work electronically.

SECTION SEVEN: A BRIEF GUIDE TO MLA CITATION

(HACKER 2-27)

IN TEXT CITATION IN GENERAL

Author's name in text:

Young offers one view on theodicy (60).

According to W.M. Paul Young, "There are times when you choose to believe something that would normally be considered absolutely irrational" (69).

Authors' names in text:

This view on theodicy has already been made by Kushner and Moishe (213-215).

Author's name in text in a multivolume work:

In his studies of gifted children, Terman describes a pattern of accelerated language acquisition (2:279).

Author's name in reference

This view on theodicy has been challenged (Rabbi Kushner 50).

Authors' names in reference:

Other theologians, like McGrath and Grentz (350-365) have argued that God enters our suffering.

Work in an anthology

(Cite the name of the author and not the editor of the anthology)

In "A Jury of her Peers," Mrs. Hale describes both a style of quilting and a murder weapon when she utters the last words of the story: "We call it -knot it, Mr. Henderson" (Glaspell 210)

A Line (s) in a Play/Literary Work

Cite the act, scene and line numbers

In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Gloucester, blinded for suspected treason, learns a profound lesson from his tragic experience: "A man may see how this world goes/with no eyes" (4.2.148-49).

A Line (s) in a Poem

Cite the part, stanza, and line numbers

The Green Knight claims to approach King Arthur's court "because the praise of you, prince, is puffed so high, / And your manor and your men are considered so magnificent" (1.12.258-59).

In Text Citation of a Sacred Text

(Hacker, 12)

When citing a sacred text such as the Bible or Qur'an, name the edition in your works cited entry. In your parenthetical citation, give the book, chapter, and verse (or their equivalent) separated by periods. Common abbreviations for books of the Bible are acceptable. **The following is an example:**

Consider the words of Solomon: "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink" (*Oxford Annotated Bible*, Prov. 25.21).

WORKS CITED

* Entries on a works cited page are listed in alphabetical order.

Book

Anker, Susan. *Real Writing: Paragraphs and Essays for College, Work, and Everyday Life*. Boston: Bedford, 1998. Print.

Book with edition

Booth, Wayne, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 2008. Print.

Book with multiple volumes

Lawall, Sarah N., and Maynard Mack, eds. *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*.
2nd ed. Vol. 2. NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002. Print.

Book with two authors

Strunk, William Jr., and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*.
Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. Print.

Book with three authors

Booth, Wayne, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*.
3rd ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 2008. Print.

Book with four or more authors

Cite the names of all four authors of do the following:
Hodges, John C., et al. *Harbrace College Handbook*. 13th ed.
Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace, 1998. Print.

Book with an editor

Craig, Patricia, ed. *The Oxford Book of Travel Stories*. Oxford: Oxford, UP, 1996.
Print.

Work in an anthology

Glaspell, Susan. "A Jury of Her Peers." *Literature and Its Writers: A Compact Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama*. Ed. Ann Charters and Samuel Charters. 3rd ed. Boston: Bedford, 2004. 194-210. Print.

Two or more books by the same author

Barndt, Joseph. *Understanding and Dismantling Racism*. Minneapolis: Fortress

Press, 2007. Print.
---. *Dismantling Racism: the Continuing Challenge to White America*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1991. Print.

Work Cited of a Sacred Text

(Hacker, 20)

Give the title of the edition of the sacred text (taken from the title page), italicized; the editor's or translator's name (if any); publication information; and the medium. Add the name of the version, if there is one.

The following is an example:

The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha. Ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. Print. Rev. Standard Vers.

Article in Magazine

***Abbreviate all months except May, June, July**

Monthly Magazine: give month and year

Fay, J. Michael. "Land of the Surfing Hippos." *National Geographic* Aug. 2004:100+. Print.

Weekly Magazine: give exact date

Lord, Lewis. "There's Something about Mary Todd." *US News and World Report* 19 Feb. 2001: 53. Print.

Article in Journal

Give volume & issue

Ryan, Katy. "Revolutionary Suicide in Toni Morrison's Fiction." *African American Review* 34:3 (2000): 389-412. Print.

Article in a newspaper

Brummitt, Chris. "Indonesia's Food Needs Expected to Soar" *Boston Globe* 1 Feb. 2005:A7. Print.

III. Works Cited: Online Sources

A Website with an author or editor

Cite the name of the author/editor; the title of the site; the sponsor or publisher of the site; the date of publication or last update; the medium (Web) and the date you accessed the site.

Peterson, Susan Lynn. *The Life of Martin Luther*. Susan Lynn Peterson, 2005. Web. 24 Jan. 2009.

Halsall, Paul, ed. *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*. Fordham U, 22 Sept. 2001. Web. 19 Jan. 2009

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OF THE COMPLETE MLA HANDBOOK.**

SECTION EIGHT: PLAGIARISM POLICY



ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Plagiarism is one of the most common areas of academic dishonesty which also might include cheating, fabrication, deception, and false collaboration.

Plagiarism is the dishonest attribution of research and thought to oneself that really belongs to someone else. It strikes at the heart of the network of trust and truthfulness that constitutes the basic morality of the academic enterprise.

The following principles can help ensure that students avoid committing plagiarism:

- Plagiarism takes place when one reproduces any five sequential words from a text, or takes ideas from a source without proper citation.
- Exact quotations should either be put in quotation marks or indented and an in-text citation should be used to indicate the source.
- Put an in-text citation at the end of any idea or fact which you found in a book or article, whether or not you change the words.
- When in doubt, document the source. Documenting sources helps your reader find more information as well as helping you avoid plagiarism.
- Your instructor is your best resource if you have any questions regarding whether or not your information is documented accurately.

Although the goal is to assist and restore the student in right standing, committing plagiarism is a breach of academic contract with the instructor and the college, and makes the student liable to *sanctions to include but not limited to disciplinary warning, failure of a given project, failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and/or possible temporary, indefinite, or permanent expulsion from the college.*

Faculty will record instances of alleged infractions and sanctions related to plagiarism, and these reports will be included in students' academic file. Students may file a formal appeal as outlined in the student grievance policy found in the Academic Catalog. Following due process, the final determination is made by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the College.

SECTION NINE: OTHER TOOLS

Using Scripture Correctly

Many of your professors will require that you use Scripture to support your viewpoints. Listed below are guidelines that will enable you to cite Scripture passages correctly.

1. In giving references to biblical books, chapters, and verses, always use Arabic numerals. Separate chapter and verse by a colon.
Example: 2 Timothy 3:16 Proverbs 27:1
2. When using a series of references in a sentence, use commas.

Example: The parable of the sower is recounted in Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:4-15.

3. When using a biblical reference to support what you have written, abbreviate the name of the book and place the reference in parentheses.

Example: The parable of the sower is recounted in three of the four Gospels (Mt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:1-20; Lk. 8:4-15).

4. When quoting a version other than the King James, include initials that identify the version you used.

Example: "Do not be anxious about anything" (Phil. 4:6 NIV)

5. Never quote a scripture passage or make reference to a Bible verse without giving its exact location – that is, cite both chapter and verse.

CAPITALIZATION

Sometimes it is difficult to know what words to capitalize when referring to biblical names and terms. Here are some guidelines:

ALWAYS CAPITALIZE THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

God

Gospel

Christ, Christianity, Christian

Bible, Word, Scripture, the Scriptures (when referring to sacred writings)

He, Him, His, You, Your, Yours, Thou, Thee, Thine (when referring to God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit)

Cross, Calvary (when referring to the substitutionary death of Christ)

Satan

Church (as a synonym for the Bride of Christ)

DO NOT CAPITALIZE THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

who, whom, whose (even when referring to deity)

biblical, biblically

scriptural, scripturally

scripture, scriptures (when using these words as synonyms for verses or passages, eg., these scriptures support my point: Gen. 1:1,2)

church (when referring to a building)

satanic, heaven, hell, the devil

Note: Journalistic practices differ from the above with regard to capitalization. The guidelines given here, however, reflect practices in *academic* writing.