

## Research Paper Guidelines (for Career Research Paper)

### Topic

The topic about which you are going to write your research paper will be a career or education option in which you may be possibly interested in pursuing. As mentioned in the syllabus, motivation is crucial for students to succeed in college. Most students are in school for some vocational (job) related reason. As we have been discussing in class, to succeed in achieving your school and job-related goals requires you have a realistic perspective and accurate information. Therefore, you will be using this assignment to learn more about a potential career.

### Layout Guidelines

The paper should have the following format:

- 1) A cover page with the title, date, and your name
- 2) A detailed outline
- 3) A thesis statement
- 4) Four to six pages of research paper, citing a minimum four different sources from any combination of the following sources. (Note: details about this information are included in the handout “Researching Career Interests.”):
  - a) Career Center Research tools (Eureka, etc.) used for Career Research Project
  - b) Periodicals (magazines, etc. related to the profession)
  - c) Books (including Myers Briggs books and/or Intro to Type & Learning)
  - d) Internet Source – **Wikipedia is not an acceptable resource for college papers.**
  - e) A related academic major (information found about the program)
  - f) Informational Interview: Professor
  - g) Informational Interview: Professional
  - h) School Research Project (Extra credit assignment)
  - i) Assessments given in class or as extra credit
- 5) A Works Cited List in either MLA or APA format including references to all of the research pieces you included in your paper.

### Paper Format

Four to six pages, 12-point font – Times Roman, double-spaced, page numbers located in the upper left-hand corner after your name (e.g.: High: 2), 1 ½” margins all around, and stapled. **Do not put your paper in any special kind of binder or folder – professors don’t appreciate them – they only get in the way.**

### Grading Guidelines

This research paper project counts 20% towards your total class grade. That grade will be determined based on the following: **50% Content** (Did you include all the sources required? Did you give sufficient information about what you found? Did you include an evaluation section?). **25% Organization** (Did you organize your information according to the format provided?). **25% Writing Style**

## Research Paper Guidelines (*for Career Research Paper*)

(Was your writing clear and easy to understand? Did you write in complete sentence and paragraph format? Did you write in your own words rather than just “cut and paste” someone else’s words? Was your paper free of typographical, spelling, grammatical and editing errors? Did you avoid plagiarism by citing sources and placing quotations around direct quotes? )

### **Process for Writing A Research Paper**

- Step 1: Schedule your paper**
- Step 2: Understand the assignment**
- Step 3: Choose your topic**
- Step 4: Gather Information**
- Step 5: Develop a thesis**
- Step 6: Develop an outline**
- Step 7: Create the draft**
- Step 8: Document sources**
- Step 9: Revise and proofread**
- Step 10: Complete the project**

### **Step 1: Schedule your paper**

In order to complete a complex project such as writing a research paper, you will need to divide your project into smaller goals, and schedule due dates for each of those smaller goals.

1. This process requires you to do backwards planning. (See above)
2. Schedule appointments with a professor and a professional as needed. (See “Researching Career Interests” and “Informational Interviews” for more information.)
3. When scheduling your various steps in this project, be sure to schedule in “reflection time.” During this process, you will need time to read, understand, and think about what you have learned before you actually sit down to write. If you can give yourself a couple of days from the time you read the material or had the interview before you must write about it, it will be much easier to write your paper. So be sure to schedule “reflection time” into the process.

## **Step 2: Understand the assignment**

This step requires that you take the time to truly understand what your professor is expecting you to do, and how this paper will be graded.

There are several types of research papers that students are often expected to write. The following three are most common:

### **Report**

Sometimes, the instructor will give the students a range or choice of topics from which to research and write about. This type of paper is really a way for students to conduct individualized study. The measure of success is how well the student can conduct research, analyze, organize and synthesize the information and communicate that information in written form. Sometimes students are asked to give their thoughts of what they have learned, and sometimes they are asked to keep their opinions out of it. Often the teacher will expect the students give a presentation to the class about the topic.

### **Issue Analysis**

A research paper may be used to bring awareness to a particular issue or problem within a field of study. This paper will usually offer an analysis of the issue, and proposed or actual solutions. The author is usually going to be a neutral observer, rather than taking sides on a particular perspective. An effective paper will clearly and completely identify the key aspects of the issue and how they relate to the field.

### **Advocacy or Persuasion**

Sometimes students are asked to take a stand about an issue, and then defend it against opposing points of view. The student will research the issues and read others' arguments for and against it. The author will anticipate and deflect arguments against the position taken, while presenting supporting evidence in favor of the position. Effective persuasion writing is evaluated based on the ability to make a case and defend against possible opposition.

So you understand what I expect of you in this research project, you will be writing a **REPORT**. Before continuing, please read and review what a report is so you know what you are expected to do.

## **Step 3: Choose your topic**

In this phase of writing a research paper, you will need to decide what subject you want to research. For this particular assignment, you have been instructed to research a potential career or education option that you are considering pursuing.

**Note:** In each class, there maybe a few exceptions to this rule – people who will be writing a report that is not career focused. However, these students will know who they are well ahead of time. I will give them personal guidance each step of

## Research Paper Guidelines (*for Career Research Paper*)

the way to know how to write their non-career report. However, these students should take the information provided here and be able to apply it to their particular topic. These students are encouraged to discuss with me any challenges they may face in translating this information into something they can use for their papers.

With any research paper you write, you may want to list a few topics/careers (in order of preference) that you may want to explore. Often a student will start off to learn about a subject, only to discover that there is not enough information to gather. You don't want to find out a week before the paper is due that you cannot find any information, and do not have a backup subject that you can research. Therefore, the possible topics/careers you prefer to explore are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have listed your possible subjects/careers, have your instructor initial your list. The purpose of having your instructor sign off on this list is simply to make sure you are on the right track. Again, you will ultimately be making the decisions in this process; my job is to be your coach by making sure your decisions are based on sound reason.

### **Step 4: Gather Information**

This step involves getting the resources required for this assignment. Refer to the handout "Researching Career Interests" for more detailed information about what are considered appropriate resources for this paper.

So that you can effectively, cite your sources in your Works Cited List, you will want to take notes on your sources. For each source you use, be sure to record the following information: Author, title, publisher, place of publication, volume, span of pages, and the date. Keep in mind, that your MLA or APA manual will help you with this process. Track this publishing information on 3X5 index cards. Number each source card, and simply write down the source number next to the information you cite. This will help you to properly identify which piece of information came from each source.

### **Step 5: Develop a thesis**

A thesis statement is a complete sentence that expresses the main idea of your paper. (Remember "Main Point" assignment?) If you were writing a regular academic paper, a thesis statement may be something like, "Internet addiction is becoming an ever-increasing problem among teenagers." You will note that this is a statement, and not a question. It is also very specific – it says "who" and "what." An effective thesis statement will be specific enough to allow the writer to narrow the topic so that the assignment can be sufficiently covered in the number of pages specified by the instructor.

## Research Paper Guidelines (*for Career Research Paper*)

For example, if the thesis statement read, “Addictions in general are becoming an ever-increasing problem among teenagers,” then the paper would need to be much longer to include other additions such as food, alcohol, drugs and sex. A paper with such a broad topic could likely wind up being 100 pages. (I don’t think you want to do that, do you?) Therefore be sure to narrow your topic effectively.

As mentioned earlier, for this paper you will be writing a report on a career that may interest you. Therefore, phrasing the thesis statement requires some careful consideration. However, the bottom line is, what do you want to emphasize in your report about this career? (1) Do you want to talk about the different ways these people are employed? (2) How about the educational preparation required for getting into the field? (3) Possibly, you might just want to talk what the job does. (4) Or, how about a combination of all of them?

Let’s use a public relations practitioner as an example. Following are some possible thesis statements that emphasize these areas. (1) “Public Relations practitioners are frequently found working in the corporate, non-profit, education, government, and mass media sectors.” (2) Public relations professionals are usually expected to have a Bachelor’s degree in the fields of public relations, journalism, or marketing. (3) Public relations practitioners are people who manage the communication process between an organization and its various audiences. (4) “A public relations practitioner often has a college education which prepared him or her to manage the communication efforts of organizations in a variety of fields.”

Once you have developed your thesis statement, have your instructor sign it off. That way you will know you are on the right track.

### **Thesis statement:**

---

---

### **Step 6: Develop an outline**

An outline gives you a basic framework for your paper. It helps you to write and organize your ideas.

Before you begin:

Determine the **purpose** of your paper

Determine the **audience** of your paper

Develop the **thesis** of your paper

Then

**Brainstorm:** List all the ideas that you want to include in your paper

## Research Paper Guidelines (*for Career Research Paper*)

- Organize:** Group related ideas together (i.e. working conditions, education, future prospects, average salaries, etc.).
- Order:** Arrange material in subsections from general to specific or from abstract to concrete.
- Label:** Create main and subtopics.

### Sample Outline

Thesis: “A public relations practitioner often has a college education which prepared him or her to manage the communication efforts of organizations in a variety of fields.”

Purpose: To help the author understand what it would be like to become a public relations practitioner.

Audience: Professor

Title: An Overview of the Public Relations Profession

- I. Introduction: Public relations profession is complex to understand
  - a. Requires a college education
  - b. Managing the communication efforts of employer
  - c. Can be found in a variety of industries
- II. Body: Public relations is complex because of many facets
  - a. Education – Bachelor’s degree is common
    - i. Public relations
    - ii. Journalism
    - iii. Communication studies
    - iv. Marketing
    - v. Business
  - b. Managing multiple communication efforts
    - i. Employee relations
    - ii. Customer relations
    - iii. Investor relations
    - iv. Community relations
    - v. Government relations
    - vi. Media relations
  - c. Industries employing public relations practitioners
    - i. Corporate
    - ii. Non-profit
    - iii. Education
    - iv. Government
    - v. Mass Media
    - vi. Professional Sports & Entertainment
  - d. Profession and my assessments
    - i. Compliments my personality
    - ii. Meets my career interests

## Research Paper Guidelines (*for Career Research Paper*)

- iii. Works well with my values
- e. Evaluation – very interesting career
  - i. Majors are interesting – prefer public relations
  - ii. Like the need for variety of skills
  - iii. Like the fast-paced environment
  - iv. Like working at professional level
- f. Conclusion – I will pursue it
  - i. Declare my major
  - ii. Determine what classes to take at Mt SAC
  - iii. Find out which universities offer public relations majors
  - iv. Find out what to do to transfer

Use Career Paper Outline Form (Research Paper Section) to help you organize the information you found. Once you have completed your outline, have your instructor sign it off.

### **Step 7: Create the draft**

Once you have created your outline, then you will be ready to develop the ideas further into a complete research paper. Your purpose is to tell your audience what you think and why you think it.

#### **The Introduction:**

First, keep in mind that you do not need to write it first. Often writers will write their introduction last. That way, they have a clear idea of what they want to say before they begin.

#### **Goals for the Introduction**

- Get your reader’s attention/arouse their curiosity
- Provide any necessary background information before you state your thesis.
- Establish why you are writing this paper.

#### **Hints for the Introduction**

- Remember to use the four w’s: Who, what, where, when, and why (is this important reading). This will help you determine what information to include and leave out. For example, you wouldn’t talk about a medical condition the same way to a doctor as you would to a two-year old child.
- One way to get your readers attention is to start with a little-known fact, startling statistic, or humor.

#### **The Body**

When writing the body of the paper, it is important to organize the information into a logical sequence, then to link the paragraphs together through the use of transitions. Transitions include common phrases such as “First, second, third, finally, in conclusion, etc. Or transitions can include starting the new paragraph with something familiar, then lead to the unfamiliar. (i.e.: “The public relations profession usually

## Research Paper Guidelines (*for Career Research Paper*)

requires a college education because the duties of the practitioner are vary complex in that they manage the communications of their employer.”) Keep in mind that the linking transition can be one word, a phrase, or a complete sentence. Let your ear decide.

### **The Conclusion**

Traditionally the conclusion is typically used to summarize the main points of the body. Keep in mind that summarizing usually involves restating the main points in different words. Remember to keep it brief. In addition to that, however, I also want you to include in your conclusion what you plan to do with the information you found. (See Career Paper Outline Form for more information.)

### **Step 8: Document sources**

You will need to document all the sources you use in writing your paper – Internet websites, journal articles, interviews, etc. Keep in mind that documenting sources takes two forms: A) Citations, and B) Works Cited List, and they are two different things.

Documenting means showing where you got information that is not your own. A research paper is a blend between your ideas and the information from other sources. Documentation is how you let the reader know which ideas are yours and which are ideas you have used from your sources to support your ideas.

### **What to document**

As a general rule of thumb, document specific ideas, opinions, and facts that are not your own. The only thing you do not need to document is common knowledge. For example, you would not need to document the fact that the current president of the United States is Barak Obama. However, if you were going to list all the governors of Rhode Island for the last 100 years, you would want to document where you got that information.

### **How much is too much?**

A research paper, as mentioned earlier should be a blend between your ideas, and ideas of others who support your point. Your paper should not be just a string of sources tied together, or a collection of facts. Sources are there to substantiate (or back up your ideas).

### **Where do you document?**

As mentioned earlier, there are two places to document: In the body of the paper, and in the Works Cited List. As you make a claim, you will follow it with some sort of reference indicator that leads the reader to the Works Cited List, which gives more information about where you got the source. The reference indicator part is usually at the end of the sentence (but not always). See your handbook for more information on how to reference.

The two handbooks that are acceptable to use are:  
MLA – Modern Language Association (for English majors)



APA – American Psychological Association (for social science majors)

### **Step 9: Revise and proofread**

#### **Revising**

When you have finished writing as much as you think you can write on your paper, you should set it aside for a while – minimum of a couple of hours, preferably a few days. This allows you to get away from it and get your mind on something else. (*Hint: As long as you are not doing your paper at the last minute, this would give you a good excuse to go play video games or something. ☺*) Come back to it after you have had a break. Carefully re-read your paper. Make as many changes as you think are necessary to make sure your thoughts are complete, your ideas flow easily, and your audience will get the point you are trying to make. Do not be afraid to do multiple revising sessions. Your current writing skill level and the time in which you have to write will determine how many revisions you will need to make.

#### **Proofreading**

Once you believe have finished revising your paper, then you will need to proofread it. This process means you look over your paper carefully, checking for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and citing errors. Also, use this time to check to make sure you have actually stated your thesis statement, and that your outline can be clearly identified. If you can still write out your thesis statement and the outline, then your paper still has its structure.

#### **Get feedback**

Once you have made all the changes you can see it needs, you need give it to someone else to look over. Ask them to first read it for comprehension. Do they understand what you are trying to say? Are there any parts that don't make sense? Is there anything that they needed to reread to understand? (If your audience needs to reread something to understand it, then this is an indication that the thought probably was not clearly communicated.) Did they find that the paper raised some questions it did not answer? Finally, do they see any grammatical or typographical errors?

Once you get your paper back, take their comments to light and make appropriate changes. It is possible that you will not incorporate their suggestions (such as they ask you to explain a term that is common-knowledge to your audience). Be sure to give them enough time to read and comment on your paper. (*Hint: One thing I have learned through experience is that some people seem to know how to give constructive feedback and some people do not. Someone who simply says, "looks good," probably does not know what to look for and how to offer constructive feedback. It will serve you in the long run to identify those people in your life who know how to offer constructive feedback.*)

### **Step 10: Complete the project**

Once you have finished writing your paper, you will need to pull it all together. Make sure your paper has the following:

Research Paper Guidelines (for Career Research Paper)

- 6) A cover page with the title, date, and your name
- 7) A detailed outline
- 8) A thesis statement
- 9) Four to six pages of research paper, citing a minimum of the following sources.  
(Note: details about this information are included in the handout “Exploring An Area of Interest” given to you earlier.):
  - a) Periodicals
  - b) Books
  - c) Internet Source
  - d) A Related academic major
  - e) Professor Interview
  - f) Professional Interview
  - g) Extra Credit: Self-Assessments
- 10) A Works Cited List in either MLA or APA format including references to all of the research pieces you included in your paper.

**Backwards-Planning Timeline**

<b><u>Step</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Time Needed</u></b>	<b><u>Due Date</u></b>
<b>Step 1: Schedule your paper</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a backwards timeline</li> <li>• Update your long-term planner to include these steps</li> <li>• Schedule appointments with a professor and a professional (see “Exploring An Area of Interest”)</li> </ul>	5%	
<b>Step 2: Understand the assignment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the paper format</li> <li>• Read and understand the paper topic</li> </ul>	5%	
<b>Step 3: Choose your topic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review your career assessment results to determine a potential career to research.</li> <li>• Review with the instructor your topic choice</li> <li>• Have instructor initial your choices</li> </ul>	5%	
<b>Step 4: Gather Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify your resources</li> <li>• Evaluate your resources for credibility</li> <li>• Read your resources</li> </ul>	20%	
<b>Step 5: Develop a thesis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write your thesis statement</li> <li>• Have your instructor initial your thesis</li> </ul>	5%	
<b>Step 6: Develop an outline</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a copy of your paper outline</li> </ul>	5%	
<b>Step 7: Create the draft</b>	20%	

Research Paper Guidelines (*for Career Research Paper*)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write the actual paper</li> </ul>		
<b>Step 8: Document sources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference your sources in the paper</li> <li>• Create your Works Cited List</li> <li>• Carefully review your references and Works Cited List for style consistency</li> </ul>	10%	
<b>Step 9: Revise and proofread</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set aside time for a break</li> <li>• Proofread your own paper</li> <li>• Revise your paper</li> <li>• Give to someone else to edit/proofread your paper</li> <li>• Revise your paper</li> </ul>	20%	
<b>Step 10: Complete the project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create the title page</li> <li>• Double-check your references for style consistency</li> <li>• Include your thesis statement</li> <li>• Include your paper outline</li> <li>• Include your extra credit assessment results</li> </ul>	5%	
<b>Turn in Project!!!!</b>		Due on Finals Day