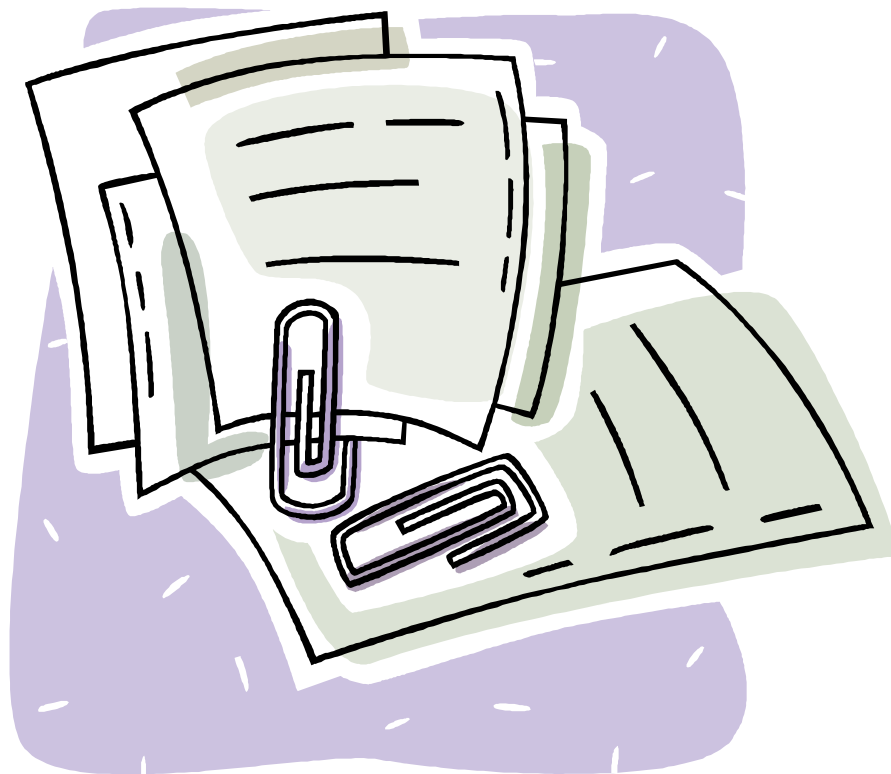


Writing Essays and Short Research Papers



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Revised June 2012

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been developed to assist you in writing essays and short research papers. The information presented here is a condensation of material contained in several resource books dealing with college study skills.

A complete listing of these books can be found in the References and Works Cited pages at the end of this booklet.

If you would like more detailed information on writing essays and research papers, please contact the Learning Skills Advisor in the Academic Support Centre at 475-6618.

For additional copies of this handout and detailed handouts on Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA) formatting styles, access the Academic Support Centre website at:

<http://www.confederationc.on.ca/academicsupportcentre/learningskills/LearningSkillsResources>

Verifying Instructions

Once you have been assigned to write an essay paper, be sure that you understand all of the instructions and know exactly what is expected of you.

Be sure you know such things as:

- whether there is an assigned topic or whether you are free to choose one
- type of essay required - e.g. descriptive, narrative, persuasive, explanatory
- the depth to which the instructor wants you to examine the topic
- whether you are required to give your own opinions
- length of the essay (i.e. number of words or number of pages)
- format required by the instructor, including (if applicable)
 - cover page
 - table of contents
 - spacing
 - endnotes or references
 - works cited
- due date
- how much the essay counts toward your final grade. (This will give you an indication of the time and effort required).

Approach

The following plan of approach will assist you in completing your assignment. The steps may be adapted to suit your requirements (e.g. if the research is not required, omit step 5).

Choose a Topic

If the topic is not assigned, choose a topic.

- Something you are interested in or would like to know more about
- Topic should be relevant to the course (e.g. don't write about "Scuba Diving" for a psychology course)
- Get the teacher's approval after selecting your topic

Approach continued

Brainstorm

Brainstorm on your topic.

- Write a list of everything you can think of on your topic. Don't worry about order - just get as many ideas down as possible.
- Or write a list of questions you would like to answer. Consider such aspects as who, what, where, when, why, how, and so what.

Bearing these points in mind, brainstorm ideas.

Example:

Consider the essay instruction:

“Discuss how education has changed over the last fifty years”

You should be able to write something about this topic. The essay requires you to discuss how something has changed – the process of education, and the material is to be limited specifically to the last fifty years. What has changed, to what extent, and what remained the same? What is education?

Listing Brainstorming Ideas:

- types of education – elementary, high school, postsecondary
- changes in levels of education
- changes in access from privileged few to everyone – public vs private
- global perspective – local, national, international

Brainstorming shows you what you already know; to develop your answer further, you need to decide what more you must find out. At this stage, you simply write down the questions to which you will seek answers. Such questions are valuable because they will guide your reading and research and help you to collect the material you need.

Tentative Outline

Make a simple tentative outline to guide your research.

- List the major items which came out of your brainstorming in the order you think they should be discussed. If you have thought of sub-ideas or examples at this stage, organize them under the appropriate major headings.

Decide on your working thesis statement (see page 7).

- This focused statement prepares both you and your reader for the essay.
- Your thesis statement helps you keep track of your purpose and organization, and gives the reader an overview of what is to come.

Approach continued

Set Deadlines

Set deadlines or time allotments for the following major tasks:

- Research
- Final Outline
- Putting it all together (writing the essay or paper using word processor)
- Typing
- Proofreading
- Revise and Rewrite (scheduled over a day or more)

Research

Research your topic and record the information.

- Resources you might consider in your research are:
 1. Your textbooks
 2. Resource people in the community
 3. Family and friends
 4. Library (school and/or community). Look for encyclopedias, books, articles, pamphlets, audiovisual material. When in doubt, tell the librarian your topic and ask for assistance in locating appropriate resources.
 5. Internet

Make notes on the information pertinent to your topic. Record the title, author, publisher, place and date of publication, and page number of every resource you use because you will need this information in referencing.

- Refer to your tentative outline and thesis statement frequently while doing your research to keep yourself on track.

Final Outline

Make a final outline to guide your writing.

- Organize the ideas from your brainstorming and research into a logical sequence.
- Adjust your thesis statement if necessary.
- Select the principal points you want to make and list them as main headings on your outline.
- List supporting details, examples, and explanations for each principal point.
- EVEN IN THE OUTLINE FORMAT, EACH PARAGRAPH MUST BEGIN WITH A MAIN-IDEA SENTENCE OR A MAJOR POINT THAT SUPPORTS YOUR THESIS.

Approach continued

Rough Draft

Write a rough draft, using your outline as a guide.

- Put your ideas down on paper, rapidly and spontaneously, according to the sequence of your outline.
- Don't be concerned with exact word choice or punctuation. These can be corrected later.
- Explain each idea completely. Where appropriate, include examples, reasons, descriptions or other supporting information.

Revise and Rewrite

Put rough draft aside, then revise and rewrite.

- Leave the draft overnight or for a few days.
- Revise and rewrite to improve organization, logic and flow, sentence structure, and wording. (see page 11).

Proofread

Proofread final draft, consider the following mistakes:

- Format
 - e.g.
 - citations (some of the phrases may have been taken from the sources, but not formatted properly. It is considered as plagiarism.)
 - page numbers (make sure the order is correct)
 - title page, reference page (your title page and reference page should be formatted according to the requirements established by your instructor)
- Grammar
 - e.g.
 - grammatical mistakes (wrong use of tenses etc.)
 - spelling mistakes
 - punctuation
 - abbreviations (abbreviations should be explained; e.g. SUCCI: the Student Union of Confederation College Inc.)
- Writing style
 - e.g.
 - misused words
 - text flow
- Organization
 - e.g.
 - logical sequence (the essay should be presented in a logical chain)
 - unity (your essay should be logically connected text, but not separate ideas)
 - headings (follow a consistent formatting style)
 - clear statement of the thesis

Final Copy

Recopy or type the final copy.

Proofread

Proofread the final copy.

***TIP** - consider reading your essay backwards!

Content

The content of an essay or research paper should include an introduction, the body or “meat” of the paper, and a summary or conclusion.

An Outline for a Formal, Short, College-Level Essay

Detailed information addressing each section in this outline is provided on pages 8 – 10

I. Introduction

- A. Attention-Getter: Quotation, Quote, Anecdote, or Statistic
- B. Tie attention-getter to main point (2 to 3 sentences)
- C. State thesis (1 - 2 sentences)
 - 1. Subject
 - 2. Attitude
 - 3. Explanation of Attitude
 - 4. Transition to first body paragraph

II. Body Paragraph # 1

- A. Topic Sentence (with transition)
 - ***Major Support #1**
 - *Details to support MS #1: Quotations/Specific Evidence
 - *Analysis: How does this prove my thesis?
 - ***Major Support #2**
 - *Details to support MS #2: Quotations/Specific/Evidence
 - *Analysis: How does this prove my thesis?
- B. Concluding Statement for Paragraph

III. Body Paragraph #2

Repeat steps as listed in ***Body Paragraph # 1***

IV. Body Paragraph #3

Repeat steps as listed in ***Body Paragraph # 1***

V. Conclusion

- A. Summary of discussion
- B. What is the significance of my topic? Why does it matter?
- C. End with question/quotation/anecdote/statistic

Content continued

Listed below are some points to keep in mind when planning and writing each of the essay sections.

Introduction

The introduction provides your essay with direction and interest. Your reader will want to know what the essay will be discussing

- May be used to:
 1. arouse reader interest (by using facts or examples or by explaining the significance of the subject)
 2. introduce the central idea
 3. identify your purpose and state the main points to be discussed
 4. State the thesis clearly and concisely
- Can be one paragraph or more (depending on the length of the paper) but should never be longer than two pages. The main structure of your introduction should begin with a broad view of the subject and then narrow to the point of your essay, **the thesis statement**.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement should simply and clearly express your point of view about the topic you have chosen. It announces your main idea and what the paper will discuss. The thesis statement is usually included in your introduction.

The thesis statement should **NOT** be an observable fact or a personal opinion.

Examples of poorly written and good thesis statements:

Poorly written thesis statements:

Observable fact: *Writing a research paper is a requirement of this course.*

Personal opinion: *I prefer not to write research papers.*

A good thesis statement:

Writing a research paper is relatively easy as long as the writer follows certain specific, sequential tasks.

This thesis statement indicates your point of view without using expressions such as “In my opinion...” or “I think that...” By definition, the essay is YOUR opinion so saying so is redundant.

Your thesis statement should encourage the reader to want to continue reading.

Content continued

Body

- Lies between the introductory paragraph and the concluding paragraph.
- Consists of a series of paragraphs which contain the information, details and examples that build up the central idea of the introduction and support your thesis.
- Must follow a sensible pattern of organization.
- Develops one point per paragraph to support the thesis.
- Paragraphs should be linked so that the reader can follow your thought processes. This can be done by:
 1. using transition words in the first sentence of the paragraph (e.g. first, therefore). **See transition word examples on page 10 of this handout.**
 2. putting key words in the final sentence of one paragraph and repeating them in the first sentence of the next paragraph.

e.g.

Many world leaders have been forced to take extraordinary precautions to ensure their safety. However, one leader who might have benefited from more stringent controls was Indira Gandhi.

The assassination of Mrs. Ghandi . . .

Summary or Conclusion

The concluding paragraph focuses the readers' attention to the purpose, thesis, and subject of your essay once again. The concluding paragraph begins with an extended statement of the thesis and traces the consequences of the idea to a broader elaboration of the central idea. This section of the paper should:

- Deal with **one** of the following:
 1. a summary of the main points presented
 2. a restatement of the central idea
 3. a concluding opinion supported by evidence presented in the paper
 4. an answer to a series of questions raised in the paper
- relate to and pull together the ideas and information in the introduction and body.
- not be more than 2 - 3 paragraphs in length.
- not simply restate the points proven in the body of the essay.

Content continued

Summary or Conclusion continued

There are several ways of ending an essay:

- a) summary of ideas with suggestions for further study
- b) personal evaluation of the ideas presented
- c) appropriate quotation and comment about the significance of the paper
- d) extension of thesis but no new material which has not been hinted at earlier

Transitional Words

Transitional (linking) words are used to connect ideas from one paragraph to another as well as relate one sentence to another within a paragraph. Transitional words show the relevance of, and relationship between paragraphs.

1. **TO INDICATE AN ADDITIONAL POINT**, you could use:
also, in addition, equally important, another, as well as, not only...but also, besides, in addition to..., furthermore, together with
2. **TO INDICATE AN EXAMPLE**, you could use:
for instance, for example, to illustrate..., some..., other..., one..., another
3. **TO INDICATE A SEQUENCE**, you could use:
First, second, next, last, finally, then, currently, now, in the past, in the future, after a few days/hours/minutes, etc., before..., after..., soon
4. **TO INDICATE A SIMILAR IDEA**, you could use:
similarly, in the same manner, in comparison, likewise, identical/identically, equal/equally, equivalent
5. **TO INDICATE A CONTRASTING IDEA**, you could use:
however, on the other hand, but, on the contrary, although this may be true..., conversely, not the same, different..., opposite..., the reverse..., unequal, in spite of..., differs from...

A Writer's Checklist

It is helpful if you are able to have a friend or family member proofread your paper. Refer to the checklist below:

<p>A. Selection of a Topic. Does the writer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. deal with a worthwhile central idea? 2. have a definite purpose for writing? 3. indicate a point of view on the topic? 4. have a specific audience in mind? 	
<p>B. Organization. Does the writer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. follow the appropriate format (i.e., MLA or APA)? 2. include a clear introduction? 3. place details in a logical order? 4. group together details related to one idea? 5. unify the writing by staying with only one main topic? 6. use transitions to signal changes in direction of thought? 7. include an effective conclusion? 	
<p>C. Development. Does the writer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. support the topic with facts, examples and details? 2. emphasize important points 3. show originality or insight? 4. keep the reader's interest? 5. select appropriate language and style? 6. include comparisons when applicable? 	
<p>D. Mechanics and Usage. Does the writer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. punctuate and capitalize correctly? 2. use complete, correct sentences? 3. stick with the same person throughout the essay (usually the third person – e.g., he, she, one, they)? 4. maintain correct pronoun-noun agreement? Examples: A student should ask questions if they don't understand. Incorrect because "student" and "they" must agree in number – both singular or both plural Correct: A student should ask questions if he/she doesn't understand, OR Students should ask questions if they don't understand. 	

Modern Language Association (MLA) Format

If your instructor has given you guidelines to follow in preparing the final copy of your essay or paper, follow those guidelines. If, however, you have been left to your own devices, or you have been advised to use the MLA (Modern Languages Association) format, you will find the following suggestions useful.

When writing in MLA format, you should note the following:

Title Page

- A separate title page is not necessary unless required by your faculty or if you include introductory notes or an outline.
 - If you do include a title page, be sure to follow the guidelines set by your instructor, or place your information in the center of the page. Include your name, title of essay, faculty name, course name and number and date.

Opening Page

- The opening page should begin one inch from the top and left side of the paper, and place your identification (double-spaced) in the upper left corner as follows:
 1. Your name
 2. Faculty name
 3. Course name and number
 4. Date
- On a separate line, center the title. Then begin the essay on the next line, indented half an inch or 5 spaces.
- Titles should not be underlined, put in quotation marks or printed in any special font. Capitalize the first word, the last word, and all principal words, including words that follow hyphens, such as “English-Speaking Countries.”
- Do not use subtitles or number divisions.

See next page for opening page in MLA style

Opening Page in MLA Style

↑ 1"	↑ ½"
← 1" → Pamela Howell	Howell 1
<i>(Double space between every line)</i>	
Dr. M. Smith	
English CS032	
April 5, 2008	
Creative Marriages	
Judging by recent divorce rates, it would seem that the traditional marriage now <i>(indent paragraphs ½"/5 spaces)</i> fails to meet the needs of...	

Font

- Fonts such as **Times New Roman**, **Arial** or **Courier** are the safest choices.
- Always use the same font throughout the text, although you may choose a different font for tables and illustrations.

Page Numbers

- Place your last name in a running header followed by a space and the page number starting with the opening page.
- Position this header in the upper right-hand corner, one half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.

Spacing

- Double space the entire paper, unless otherwise advised by your instructor.

Margins

- Leave one-inch margins at the top, bottom, and sides of pages, except for the page number header.
- Indent the first word of each paragraph half an inch or 5 spaces.
- Quotations of 4 or more lines should be written as their own paragraph without quotation marks, set on a separate line and indented ten spaces or one inch from the left margin.

Print in Bold

- Do not bold in-text citations and works cited in your essay.

Opening Page in MLA Style

- *Citing Sources*
- MLA is a simple two-step process of acknowledging sources:
 1. In the text of the paper, in parentheses, the author of the original work and the page number(s) of the information used are cited. Here is an example:

Ancient writers attributed the invention of the monochord to
Pythagoras, who lived in the sixth century BC (Marcuse 197).

2. In an alphabetical list of Works Cited on a separate page at the end of the paper, sources are explained in more detail so readers can access them. For the example above, look for the entry in the **Works Cited** page below. Subsequent references to the same work also use the author's name and a page number. Do not use *ibid.* or *op. cit.*

A WORKS CITED PAGE APPEARS AT THE END OF AN MLA PAPER

Howell 15

Works Cited

Ballenger, Bruce. The Curious Researcher: A Guide to Writing Research Papers.

Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 4th ed. New York:

The Modern Language Association of America, 1995.

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing. 2nd ed. New

York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1988.

Marcuse, Sibyl. A Survey of Musical Instruments. New York: Harper, 1975.

Stewart, Kay L., Chris J. Bullock and Marian E. Allen. Essay Writing for Canadian

Students (with readings). 4th ed. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall Allyn and

Bacon Canada, 1998.

American Psychological Association (APA) Format

When writing in APA format, note the following:

Title Page

- Double-space and center the complete entry vertically and horizontally on the page using uppercase and lowercase letters
- Include:
 1. the title of the paper
 2. the author of the paper/your name
 3. course name, course number, course section
 4. professor's name
 5. due date

APA Style First Page

<i>left margin</i>	↑ ½" ↓	<i>right margin</i>
← 1"→		← 1"→
	<i>Running Head:</i> Affirmative Action	4
		↖ <i>page #</i>
	<i>center title</i> ↘	
	Affirmative Action: Help or Hindrance?	<i>Double space</i>
<i>1st line tab indent</i>		←
	(5 – 7 spaces)→ At a recent “Day of Conversations” about diversity on my campus, I	
<i>Double space →</i>	found myself disagreeing with both faculty and other students on whether	← <i>all</i>
<i>text</i>	affirmative action in college...	<i>other lines</i> <i>in paragraph are</i> <i>flush to left margin</i>

APA Page Format

- Continue double-spacing each line, including titles and subtitles.
- Maintain 1" margins on all sides.
- All pages are numbered consecutively, beginning with the title page and including the reference page(s).

American Psychological Association (APA) Format continued

APA Page Format continued

- The page number and header should appear in the upper right-hand corner. Page numbers should be typed at least 1" from the right-hand margin, about ½ " from the top of the page, following the running head.
- Indent the first word of a paragraph 5 – 7 spaces or ½ " from the left margin.

Body of the Paper

- Use a 12-point font.
- Fonts such as **Times New Roman**, **Arial** or **Courier** are the safest choices.
- Text begins 1" from the top of the page.
- Titles should appear in upper and lower case letters.

Citing Sources

- APA is a simple two-step process of acknowledging sources:
 1. Parenthetical notation includes author's name and date. Use page or chapter number denoted with a "p." or "chap." for direct quotations or specific parts of a source.
Example:
"Ancient writers attributed the invention of the monochord to Pythagoras, who lived in the sixth century BC" (Marcuse, 1975, p. 197).
 2. In an alphabetical list of References on a separate page at the end of the paper, sources are explained in more detail so readers can access them. (See Example References page).

General Rules for Reference Page

1. Begin on a new page which is numbered as a continuation of the text.
2. Double-space the entire Reference section.
3. Start the first line of a reference flush with the left margin. All other lines (if any) of that entry are indented 5 – 7 spaces.
4. Entries contain the following general information (when available) in this order: author, year of publication, title, place of publication and publisher. For online publications, you will need the date retrieved and site where you found the information.
5. Arrange list in alphabetical order by last name of author followed by initials of first and middle (if given) names. For one to six authors, list every one. For seven or more, list the first six, add a comma and et al.
6. If there is no author, move the title to the author position before the date. Alphabetize by first word of the title after A, An or The.
7. Capitalize only the first word, proper nouns, and the first word after a colon for titles of books and articles in journals, magazines and newspapers.

A REFERENCES PAGE APPEARS AT THE END OF AN APA PAPER

References

- Babson, K., Beck, E., Quintero, S., & Smith, V. (2003). *APA style general guidelines*. English Works! Gallaudet University: Washington, D.C. Retrieved February 5, 2003, from <http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/writing/apaguide.html>
- Ballenger, B. (2001) *The curious researcher: A guide to writing research papers* (3rd ed.). Toronto: Allyn and Bacon.
- Coppola, L. (June 2001). *APA citation format*. Retrieved January 29, 2001, from the World Wide Web: <http://wally.rit.edu/pubs/guides/apa.html>.
- Jones, M. (2003). Writing, revising and editing research papers. *English Review*, 72.2, 157-191.
- Neyhart, D. & Karper, E. (November 2001). *Using American Psychological Association (APA) format* (Updated to 5th Edition). Retrieved November 21, 2001, from the World Wide Web: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html.
- Publication manual of the American Psychological Association: Fifth Edition*. (July 2001). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Rodrigues D., & Rodrigues, R. (2000). *The research paper and the world wide web*, (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

SUMMARY

Writing essays and/or research papers is an integral part of many college courses. Writing is a creative process as well as a mechanical one. The mechanical steps and specific information included in this booklet are meant to guide you through the creative process of writing.

If you have any questions about the information in this booklet or require additional information or assistance, please don't hesitate to come into the Academic Support Centre or phone 475-6618 to speak with the Learning Skills Advisor.