

Research Paper Format

OCEANSIDE VUSD

General Introduction

IN AN ATTEMPT TO STANDARDIZE THE FORMAT USED BY STUDENTS TO COMPLETE RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS, THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HAS CREATED GUIDELINES GOVERNING VARIOUS ASPECTS OF RESEARCH PAPERS. IT IS OUR HOPES THAT THIS DOCUMENT WILL SERVE AS A RESOURCE FOR ALL DEPARTMENTS USING RESEARCH SKILLS. THE BASIS FOR THIS DOCUMENT IS THE MLA (MODERN LANGUAGES ASSOCIATION) STYLE SHEET. MOST ACCREDITED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES RECOMMEND THE USE OF SOME VARIATION OF MLA FORMAT, AND WE ACCEPT ANY STANDARD FORMAT THAT IS USED CONSISTENTLY. THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE IS TO ASSIST ALL STAFF MEMBERS AT OCEANSIDE TO USE A STANDARD FORMAT CONSISTENTLY ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND GRADE LEVELS.

Table of Contents

Plagiarism	...	4-9
Researching	...	10-13
Developing a Thesis	...	14
Organizing Information	...	15-16
How to Use Quotations	...	17-18
Documentation	...	19-20
The Works Cited Page	...	21-22
Format Specifics	...	23
Checklist	...	24

Plagiarism

“A writer who fails to give appropriate acknowledgment when repeating another’s wording or particularly apt term, paraphrasing another’s argument, or presenting another’s line of thinking is guilty of plagiarism. You may certainly use other persons’ words and thoughts in your research paper, but the borrowed material must not appear to be your creation” (Gibaldi 26).

Your research paper is necessarily an interplay of your own ideas and information gleaned from your sources. You must not fail to give credit to your sources, however, or be guilty of plagiarism, a serious academic offense. According to Diane Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference*, the following three actions are deemed plagiarism:

- a. failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas**
- b. failing to include borrowed language in quotation marks**
- c. failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words**

How do Colleges Define Plagiarism?

From the University of Washington Student Handbook

Plagiarism is defined as taking the ideas, writings or inventions of another and representing them as your own. As long as you give credit to the originator of the material you are not guilty of plagiarism, but merely enclosing statements or sentences in quotation marks is not sufficient. You must cite the source.

Examples of Plagiarism:

- Turning in a paper from a previous class
- Having another person write an assignment (for pay or for free) and putting your name on it
- Modifying or paraphrasing another's ideas or writings and submitting them as your own
- Having someone rewrite substantial portions of your paper and submitting the final paper as your own
- Copying phrases, sentences, sections, paragraphs, or graphics from another and not giving credit by citing the source
- Turning in another's solution to an exam or a question on an exam as your own.

Examples that are not Plagiarism:

- Asking someone to read your assignment and suggest possible improvements
- Getting together with other students to discuss an assignment
- Asking your instructor for assistance with an assignment
- Quoting extensively from another's works but giving credit
- Not citing sources for information that is considered common knowledge or that is readily available in dictionaries or your course textbook. For example, you need not cite your textbook as the source of equations that you use in an assignment

Avoiding Plagiarism

From Hamilton College

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to keep control of your argument. You should include ideas from other sources **only** when those ideas add weight to your argument. Keep the following suggestions in mind when you are using material from other sources:

- Select carefully. Quotations should give weight to your argument. In general, do not select quotations which only repeat points you have already made.
- Be sure to integrate all ideas from other sources into your own discussion. Introduce direct quotations with your own words. After quoting, explain the significance of the quotation.
- Avoid quoting more than is needed. Most of the time, brief quotations suffice.
- Use direct quotations only when the author's wording is necessary or particularly effective. Some disciplines discourage direct quotations. Check with your instructor.
- If you are using material cited by an author and you do not have the original source, introduce the quotation with a phrase such as "as is quoted in . . ."
- End citation alone is not sufficient for direct quotations; place all direct quotations within quotation marks. Be sure to copy quotations exactly as they appear.
- To avoid any unintentional failure to cite sources, include all citation information on note cards and in your first draft.

At all times, stay in control of your own argument and let your own voice speak for you.

A Common Pitfall: the note taking stage

Plagiarism often starts with the note taking stage of the research process. If possible, have a clear question in mind before heading off to the library so you will not waste time taking extraneous notes. When taking notes, be sure to distinguish between paraphrases and direct quotations. When you are copying a direct quotation, be extremely precise. Note all the information you will need for the citation and copy the quotation exactly as it appears. Some writers use only direct quotations when note taking so there can be no confusion as to whether a note is a paraphrase or a direct quotation. Other writers color-code notes: one color for paraphrases, another for quotations. To ensure that you are not copying wording or sentence structure when paraphrasing, you might find it helpful to **put the source material aside**.

Examples:

Sometimes writers do not recognize when their use of other writers' ideas constitutes plagiarism. Versions of the following source can help you see the difference between acceptable paraphrasing and plagiarism (The Bedford Handbook for Writers 508).

Original Source #1

If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists (Davis 26).

Version A:

The existence of a signing ape unsettled linguists and startled animal behaviorists (Davis 26).

Comment:

Plagiarism. Even though the writer has cited the source, the writer has not used quotation marks around the direct quotation "the existence of a signing ape." In addition, the phrase "unsettled linguists and startled animal behaviorists" closely resembles the wording of the source.

Version B:

If the presence of a sign-language-using chimp was disturbing for scientists studying language, it was also surprising to scientists studying animal behavior (Davis 26).

Comment:

Still plagiarism. Even though the writer has substituted synonyms and cited the source, the writer is plagiarizing because the source's sentence structure is unchanged.

Version C:

According to Flora Davis, linguists and animal behaviorists were unprepared for the news that a chimp could communicate with its trainers through sign language (Davis 26).

Comment:

No plagiarism. This is an appropriate paraphrase of the original sentence.

Original Source #2

The joker in the European pack was Italy. For a time, hopes were entertained of her as a force against Germany, but these disappeared under Mussolini. In 1935 Italy made a belated attempt to participate in the scramble for Africa by invading Ethiopia. It was clearly a breach of the covenant of the League of Nations for one of its members to attack another. France and Great Britain, the Mediterranean powers, and the African powers were bound to take the lead against Italy at the league. But they did so feebly and halfheartedly because they did not want to alienate a possible ally against Germany. The result was the worst possible: the league failed to check aggression, Ethiopia lost her independence and Italy was alienated after all (J.M. Roberts, *History of the World*. New York: Knopf, 1976. 845).

Version A:

Italy, one might say, was the joker in the European deck. When she invaded Ethiopia, it was clearly a breach of the covenant of the League of Nations, yet the efforts of England and France to take the lead against her were feeble and halfhearted. It appears that those great powers had no wish to alienate a possible ally against Hitler's rearmend Germany.

Comment:

Plagiarism. The writer has taken entire phrases from the source, and there is no citation. The writer's interweaving of his or her own language does not mean that the writer is innocent of plagiarism.

Version B:

Italy was the joker in the European deck. Under Mussolini in 1935, she made a belated attempt to participate in the scramble for Africa by invading Ethiopia. As J.M. Roberts points out, this violated the covenant of the League of Nations (Roberts 845) But France and Britain, not wanting to alienate a possible ally against Germany, put up only feeble and halfhearted opposition to the Ethiopian adventure. The outcome, as Roberts observes, was "the worst possible the league failed to check aggression, Ethiopia lost her her independence, and Italy was alienated after all" (Roberts 845).

Comment:

Still plagiarism. Even though the writer has used two correct citations from the source, he or she has not cited other phrases.

Version C:

Much has been written about German rearmament and militarism in the period 1933-39. But Germany's dominance in Europe was by no means a foregone conclusion. The fact is that the balance of power might have been tipped against Hitler if one or two things had turned out differently. Take Italy's gravitation toward an alliance with Germany, for example. That alliance seemed so very far from inevitable that Britain and France actually muted their criticism of the Ethiopian invasion in the hope of remaining friends with Italy. They opposed the Italians in the League of Nations, as J.M. Roberts observes, "feebly and halfheartedly because they did not want to alienate a possible ally against Germany" (Roberts 845). Suppose Italy, France and Britain had retained a certain common interest. Would Hitler have been able to get away with his remarkable bluffing bullying in the later Thirties?

Comment:

No plagiarism. The writer properly acknowledges the one use of Roberts' ideas. (Note that the author has chosen to use only one idea from the source and has integrated that idea into his or her own argument.)

A Final Note:

Learning how to use the ideas of others to add weight to your own involves effort and a commitment to academic honesty. It is not always clear exactly when or how to use sources, and sometimes you will need advice. Since your teachers are most familiar with the expectations of their disciplines, they are the best people to ask.

Plagiarism Policy

This policy exists to promote academic growth and integrity. The intention of a research paper is to broaden one's understanding and contemplation of the given topic. Plagiarism stands in direct opposition to such an exercise. Should a student be found guilty of plagiarism, the following steps will be taken.

- If a faculty member has confirmed an incidence of plagiarism, she will alert the student and building administrator
- Depending upon the severity of the act of plagiarism, the student may receive a failing grade for the paper and be subject to disciplinary action

Student Proclamation

I have read and understand the various aspects of plagiarism presented in the Oceanside Research Paper Guide and understand the steps that will be taken if I plagiarize.

Student Signature _____

Date _____

Conducting Research

From A Writer's Reference

1. Pose possible questions worth exploring

Before you devise a thesis or begin searching for information, pose several questions about your topic that seem interesting or worth looking into. Here for example are some preliminary questions jotted down by students who were asked to write about popular music.

Examples:

- What role does corporate radio play in the creation of recording artists?
- Are recording artists such as Britney Spears responsible for the trend in more revealing clothing?
- Should CDs be rated by the government for decency?
- Is Tupac actually alive?
- How did the "British Invasion" affect American culture?

As you formulate possible questions, make sure they are capable of sustaining an entire research paper. Choose questions that are narrow (not too broad), challenging (not too bland), and grounded (not too speculative).

Choosing a Narrow Question

If your initial question is too broad, given the length of the paper you plan to write, look for ways to restrict your focus. Here, for example, is how two students narrowed their initial questions.

Too Broad

- What are the hazards of fad diets?
- Is the military seriously addressing the problem of sexual harassment?

Narrower

- What are the hazards of liquid diets?
- To what extent has the army addressed the problem of sexual harassment since the Aberdeen scandal?

Choosing a Challenging Question

Your research paper will be more interesting to both you and your audience if you base it on an intellectually challenging line of inquiry. Avoid bland questions that fail to provoke thought or to engage readers in debate.

Too Bland

- What is obsessive-compulsive disorder?
- Where is wind energy being used?

Challenging

- What treatments for obsessive-compulsive disorder show the most promise?
- Does investing in wind energy make economic sense?

Choosing a Grounded Question

Finally, you will want to make sure that your research question is grounded, not too speculative. Although speculative questions -- such as those that address philosophical, ethical or religious issues -- are worth asking and may receive some attention in a research paper, they are inappropriate central questions. The central argument of a research paper should be grounded in evidence; it should not be based entirely on beliefs.

Too Speculative

- Is capital punishment moral?
- What is the difference between a just and an unjust law?

Grounded

- Does capital punishment deter crime?
- Should we adjust our laws so that penalties for possession of powdered cocaine and crack cocaine are comparable?

2. Create a Research Strategy

A research strategy is a systematic scheme for tracking down sources. To create a search strategy appropriate for your research question, ask yourself two questions:
 What kinds of resources should I draw on?
 In what order should I conduct my research?

Appropriate Resources

Before you begin researching, consider what information you will need and where you are likely to find it. If your research question addresses a historical issue, for example, you might look at reference works, books, scholarly articles (in print or online) and primary sources such as speeches. If your question addresses a current political issue, however, you might turn to magazine and newspaper articles, Web sites, government documents, discussion groups on the Internet, and possibly opinion surveys that you conduct yourself. With very current issues, books are not

useful because by the time the book is published, it is already dated.

Order of Search

Often a good research strategy moves from sources that give you an overview of your subject to those that supply you with more specialized information. Some general reading will familiarize you with the ways in which scholars or debaters are framing issues related to your topic. Once you understand the intellectual or social context of your topic, you will be prepared to focus your search more narrowly.

Resources to Consider when Creating a Research Strategy

Library Resources

General and specialized reference works

Books

Articles in scholarly journals

Articles in magazines and newspapers

Government documents

Primary sources such as diaries and letters

Audiovisual materials

Internet Resources

Web sites

Reference works

Electronic texts (books, poems, so on)

Government documents

News articles

Newsgroups and listservs

E-mail

Field Research

Interviews

Opinion surveys

Discussion groups

Literature from organizations

Observations and experiments

Source Legitimacy

Since the foundation for research papers is the sources used, it is imperative that students use legitimate sources. The list of questions below should help students to determine the quality of a source.

Who is the author?

Do the credentials of the author make him an authority on the subject? If you do not know the author, then you must question the veracity of the source. Not all sources will have an author, but if the publication is legitimate the source is probably acceptable despite the lack of an author. If you can't identify the author or the publication, then how can the source be legitimate?

Is the source "up to date"?

The age of the source is more relevant for certain topics. If no new research has taken place, then older sources will do. If the topic is evolving then more recent sources are necessary.

Is the publication biased?

If the source is written by someone with an agenda, then you must present the material with that stipulation if your paper is to be judged as accurate.

How accurate is the source?

If there are misspelled words or statistics that contradict legitimate sources then you need to seriously question the legitimacy.

You need to be most careful when dealing with the internet, as this is the easiest place to stumble upon sources which are not legitimate.

Developing a Thesis

You do not begin the research process with a thesis. You develop research questions, conduct research, read your sources and then, and only then, develop a tentative thesis based on all the new information you have just discovered. This is crucial to creating an effective paper. Steps **MUST** be done in order. If you have a thesis before you've done research you are not leaving your mind open to all the possibilities inherent in your topic. The idea behind a research paper is to learn about a new topic, if you think you already know the answers before you've searched, your paper will be a failure.

The thesis is a one sentence statement of your central idea. The thesis expresses not just your opinion, but your informed, reasoned judgment.

In a research paper, your thesis will answer the central research question that you posed earlier. For example, read the following research question and a tentative thesis statement from Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*.

Research Question

Because of the fear of an oil shortage, should the United States lift its ban on drilling for oil in Alaska?

Tentative Thesis

Because fossil fuel is soon to be obsolete, the United States should not lift its ban on drilling for oil in Alaska, but instead invest in alternative energy sources.

There is a vast difference between a topic and a thesis statement. One is like an entire universe, while the other is a single planet.

Organizing Information

Writing a research paper can become a rigorous exercise in organization. In order for things to run smoothly, you must dedicate yourself to keeping precise track of a great deal of paper. Keep a folder where you will only store information for your topic and make certain you put all your information in it and nothing which is off topic.

According to *A Writer's Reference*, you should keep a record of any sources that you consult. You will need this record, called a working bibliography, when you compile the list of works cited that will appear at the end of your paper. The working bibliography will contain more sources than you'll actually use and put in your works cited page.

NECESSARY INFORMATION FOR A WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Call number
- All authors; any editors or translators
- Title and subtitle
- Edition
- Publication information: city, publishing company and date

PERIODICAL ARTICLES

- All authors of the article
- Title and subtitle of article
- Title of magazine, journal or newspaper
- Date and page numbers
- Volume and issue numbers, if relevant

INTERNET SOURCES

- All authors, editors, compilers, or translators of the text
- Title and subtitle of the material you want to use and title of the longer work
- Publication information for any print version of the source
- Title of the site or discussion list name
- Author, editor, or compiler of the web site or online database
- Date of publication
- Any page or paragraph numbers
- Name of any organization or institution sponsoring or associated with the site
- Date you visited the site
- URL or other information needed to access the site

Using Note Cards

The easiest way to handle all the information you're going to be sifting through is by using 3"x5" cards (or larger). Place the bibliographic information on one side of the card and possible quotes or paraphrases from that source on the other side. This way, when you come to write the paper, the organizing force is your own argument, and these cards are like tiny bricks you can add to your overarching ideas. You need not worry about plagiarism if you follow this advice.

Also helpful in this method of organization is that you always know where your information has come from.

Taking the time in the library or on the computer to write down the bibliographic information will save you countless headaches later, trying to remember where information came from and when such information was published, etc.

Using Photocopies and Printouts

As part of your research, you will also be accruing piles of information -- from the internet in the form of printouts and from books and magazines in the form of photocopies.

They do not take the place of note cards. Staple your hard copy to the appropriate note card and highlight and annotate. When you go to write the paper, you should use your annotations to refresh your memory about the issue. Never read an article and begin drafting directly. The chances that you will plagiarize are too great. Keep the articles, however, to double check that you haven't unintentionally plagiarized in your own paper.

How to Use Quotations

A major aspect of the research paper is the interplay between your own argument and outside sources that enhance your contention. Remember -- the primary element is your own voice. Construct your paper firmly on your thoughts and insights. Use quotations and outside sources to decorate that construction.

When to Quote

- When the quotation is concise and powerful
- When an authority's words carry weight
- When it would be impossible to restate as effectively in your own words

How to Quote

When the text you will be quoting is three lines or less in its original state, you quote within the body of your paragraph.

Example:

Early colonists took a dim view of the lion. According to Kevin Hansen, they saw it "as a threat to livestock, as a competitor for the New World's abundant game, and most importantly, as the personification of the savage and godless wilderness they meant to cleanse and civilize" (1).

When the text you will be quoting is four lines or more in its original state, you block quote.

Example:

Conrad's use of the nature as a primal corruptor is evidenced most clearly in his ending.

One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, "I am lying here in the dark waiting for death." The light was within a foot of his eyes. I forced myself to murmur, 'Oh nonsense!' and stood over him as if transfixed. Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. (Conrad 126)

Specifications for Short Quotes:

- use short quote format for three lines or less
- weave quotes into the body of the paper
- copy exactly the way it looks in text (do not change content)
- use brackets [] -- not parenthesis -- to add words inside the quotation marks
- if there are no quotes in the original, add “ ”

Specifications for Long Quotes:

- ONLY use for 4 or more lines
- single space
- tab in margin twice
- copy quote exactly as it appears (do not use quotation marks to indicate it is quoted -- the blocking takes care of that)

Nonessential Filler:

- use an ellipsis (. . .) to remove unnecessary information
- at the end of a sentence add the final mark of punctuation (.... or ...? or...!)
- keep quotes lean
- use ellipsis to help ideas flow into the paper

Documentation

Parenthetical Documentation

In the paper include two pieces of information each time you cite a source:

- The last name of the author or authors
- The page number(s) where the information is located

General Guidelines

Place information inside parenthesis. Example: (Diderot 73)

Do not include “p” or the word page

Do not include punctuation between author and page number

When the author’s name is used to introduce quote, place only the page number in parenthesis.

Example: The author, Joseph Conrad, ends Kurtz’s life with the famous line “The horror: The horror” (133).

The period should be placed after the parenthesis (in opposition to standard rule); question marks and exclamation marks should be placed in the standard location.

Examples:

“I could stand the things he said better than hers” (Benet 182).

Mrs. Bridges wonders, “Is my daughter mine?” (Connell 135)

“It was Olive Father loved best,’ Sarah Ann screamed!” (Rich 185)

Be sure Work Cited page corresponds with parenthetical information.

Special Considerations and Examples

More than one author: for works with two or three authors include all the names in the text or in the parenthesis. For four or more authors use only the first author’s name followed by “et al.”

Examples:

(Johnson and Smith 133)

(Florez et al. 198)

(May, Hope and Wales 97)

Same author for more than one work: Include the author's name and an abbreviated form of the title.

Example:

(Conrad, *Heart* 133)

Non print sources: For TV programs, interviews, films, etc. include only the title or the author. If the information in the Works Cited page contains other information (such as director or interviewer) as the first mention, then include that information inside the parenthesis.

Example:

(Coppola)

The Works Cited Page

Any author's name cited in the body of the paper points the reader toward the full information about the source placed at the end of the paper on the Works Cited page. This is not a bibliography. It is, quite simply, works you have cited (quoted).

General Guidelines

- this is a list of sources used directly in the paper
- if the work is not directly cited, it should not be part of the Works Cited page
- the list should be alphabetized by author's last name
- sources without authors should be listed by first main word in entry
- the list should NOT be numbered
- begin the list on a new unnumbered page after the last page of the paper
- center the heading (Works Cited) without quotation marks or a period -- underline it
- indent all lines except the first line of a citation -- one tab or five spaces
- double space throughout

On the following page you will find an example of a properly formatted Works Cited page.

Works Cited

- Coles, Robert. "Right, Wrong and the White House." *Newsweek* 13 November 2002:39.
- Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Fourth ed., New York: MLA America, 1995.
- Moffett, James and Kenneth R. McElheny, eds. *Points of View*. New York: Mentor, 1966.
- Turner, Ted. Interview. *Charlie Rose*. Channel 13. WNET, New York. 6 Nov. 2000.

Format Specifics

Margins:	... ONE inch all around. Only left justified.
Print, Font type, Font size:	... Always dark black printing ink. Standard type such as Times New Roman or Courier; select a regular size of 10-12 point.
Space between lines :	... Double
Spaces after an end mark (periods, question marks, etc.):	... Two
Page numbers:	... Placed in top right margin after a slash and your last name. Example: Sexton/2. Begin numbering with the second page. The first page has a heading, title and no page number.
Heading specs:	... In the upper left hand corner place the following information in the following manner: Your Name Course Name Instructor Name Date
Title specs:	... Title should be centered, same font and size as paper and NOT underlined.
Paragraphing	... Indent 5 spaces or .5 inch from left
Language	... Do not employ contractions, slang or abbreviations. Avoid informal diction; vary sentence structure.

Adhere to these format specifications. Especially in high school, one purpose of the research paper is to show that you can follow a standardized and specific format. Any deviation may result in a lowered grade, as per the instructor's discretion.

Checklist

Complete checklist and make appropriate changes/corrections before you print your final draft.

Works Cited

Check

Every source cited in Works Cited page is used directly in paper at least once.

Follows the proper form as outlined on the Sample Page.

Body

Introductory paragraph is engaging and lively.

Thesis stated clearly at the end of introduction.

Contains a conclusion that wraps up argument succinctly.

Uses transitions between paragraphs.

Paper is the proper length.

Quotations

Block long quotes -- don't use quotation marks.

Use approximately 2-3 references per page.

Cite all the original ideas.

Avoid using too much from one source.

The voice of the paper is clearly your own.

Style/Mechanics/Grammar

Use the proper margins, font and specs.

Avoid first and second person pronouns (forms of I and you).

Spell check

Sentence structure and length is varied.

Paper is devoid of clichés and slang.

I have read the paper aloud to detect awkward passages.

Who proofread your paper?

Signature of proofreader: _____