

Preparing for your Research Paper

Time	Topic	Teaching Point	Activity	Resources
12:50 – 12:55	Opening Question: What are some of the challenges you face when you have to write a research paper?	Writing research papers becomes less challenging if we adhere to some basic rules.	Brainstorming activity: questions which must be answered before you begin your research.	Handout 1, 2 & 3 Pre-writing Checklist Research Paper Calendar Research Paper Plan
12:55 – 1:00	Brainstorming the Topic & Writing Research Questions	Writing research questions narrows your research focus.	Brainstorming activity: Based on the topic, gun control, the group will come up with a number of sub-themes	Handout 4: Topic web
1:00 – 1:05	Develop Keywords	Conducting research on a topic begins with developing keywords	Brainstorming activity: Think of synonyms for your topic	Handout 5: Keywords
1:05 – 1:10	Search for Books	Use those keywords to search catalogs for books	Hands on activity: Search I-Share catalog for books	Finding books in the I-Share catalog
1:10: - 1:15	Writing a Thesis Statement	A well written thesis statement guides your research paper.	Based on the research question, each individual will write their own thesis statement.	Handout 6: Elements of a Good Thesis Statement

Time	Topic	Teaching Point	Activity	Resources
1:15 – 1:20	Developing an Outline	An outline helps develop the structure of your paper.	Based on the research questions and thesis statement each individual will draft an outline.	Handout 7: Elements of a Good Outline.
1:20 – 1:25	Select a Database for Articles	It is important to select the right database for your research.	Hands on activity: Navigate Galvin Library website to find the right database	Finding journal articles
1:25 – 1:30	Search for Articles in a Database	Use those keywords to search a database for articles	Hands on activity: Search Academic Search Premier for articles	Finding scholarly articles
1:30 – 1:35	Writing Drafts As You Research	Writing does not begin when you finish your research. It is a continuous process.	Discuss what different drafts should contain.	Handout 8: Writing Resources.

Handout 1: Pre-Writing Checklist

Questions Which Should Be Answered Before You Begin Your Research Paper

1. What is the objective of the research paper? What skills or knowledge are you expected to demonstrate?
2. What type of research paper is required? Informative, argumentative, persuasive?
3. Are there any page limits?
4. What citation style is required? MLA, APA, CMS?
5. Are any draft papers required? If so, what is required for the draft?
6. In what form is the final paper due? Electronic or hard copy?
7. Are there specific format requirements: margins, font size, line spacing etc?
8. Are there limitations on the sources required for the paper? E.g. Internet sources?
9. What kind of help can you receive on this paper? E.g. assistance from the writing center?
10. When is the paper due?

Handout 2: Sample Calendar for Research Paper

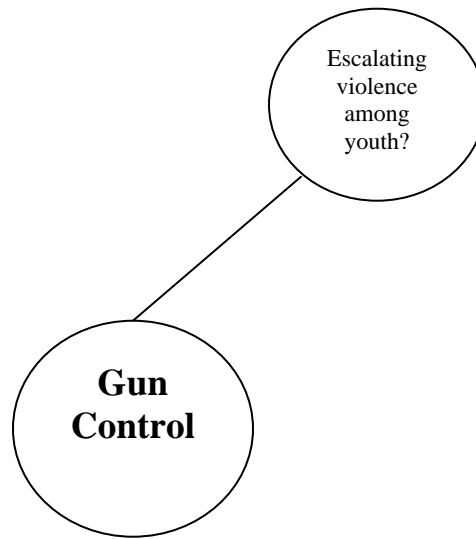
April						
<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
			1 Receive Assignment. Ensure all questions on Checklist are answered	2	3 Brainstorm the Topic and Write possible Research Questions OR Define key terms given in the assignment	4
5	6 Plan a research strategy with your librarian: Developing Key words, Searching for Books	7	8 Settle on Topic OR Settle on Research Plan Locate Sources →	9	10	11
12	13 Read and Take Notes	14	15 Draft a Thesis Statement and Develop your Outline	16 Settle on Database and Search for Articles in the Database	17	18 Draft your paper →
19	20	21	22 Visit the Writing Center with your draft	23 Do further research or make necessary revisions	24	25
26	27 Finalize your Works Cited page and review checklist	28	29 Proofread final draft	30 Paper Due		

2009

Handout 3: Research Paper Plan

1. What is the research topic?
2. What is/are the research question/s?
3. What is your thesis statement?
4. Who is your intended audience?
5. What will be your approach to proving your thesis? Anecdotes, comparison and contrast, statistics, examples etc.
6. What kinds of sources may be relevant for your research? Primary, secondary?
7. What are your keywords or search criteria?

Handout 4: Topic Web or Clustering



Possible Research Questions:

1. *E.g.: Can stricter gun laws curb the escalating violence among youth?*
- 2.

Handout 5: Keywords Worksheet

Referring to the **keywords** you identified on **Handout 3**, select three of the words that you believe best encapsulate the subject of your presentation. Enter each word as its own “concept” in the chart below. Then list synonyms for that concept in the same column. See the example for help.

	<i>Example</i>	1		2		3
A	<i>Concept 1:</i> <i>Teenagers</i>	Concept 1:	AND	Concept 2:	AND	Concept 3:
	<i>OR</i>	OR		OR		OR
B	<i>Synonym 1:</i> <i>Teens</i>	Synonym 1:		Synonym 2:		Synonym 3:
	<i>OR</i>	OR		OR		OR
C	<i>Synonym 2:</i> <i>Adolescents</i>	Synonym 1:		Synonym 2:		Synonym 3:
	<i>OR</i>	OR		OR		OR
D	<i>Synonym 3:</i> <i>College students</i>	Synonym 1:		Synonym 2:		Synonym 3:
	<i>OR</i>	OR		OR		OR

These three concepts and their synonyms will help you create an accurate and refined “search string” to use when conducting database searches.

Handout 6: Characteristics of a Good Thesis Statement¹

What is an effective thesis statement?

An effective thesis statement is a **central idea** that requires **supporting evidence**; it is of **adequate scope** for a research paper of the assigned length; and it is **sharply focused**.

Three Elements of a good Thesis statement

1. A thesis must require **proof** or **further development** through facts and details; it cannot itself be a fact or description.

Too Factual: The polygraph was developed by Dr. John A. Larson in 1921

Revised: Because the polygraph has not been proved reliable, even under controlled conditions, its use by employers should be banned.

2. A thesis should be of **sufficient scope** for your assignment, **not too broad and not too narrow**. Unless you are writing a book or a very long research paper, the following thesis is too broad.

Too Broad: Mapping the human genome has many implications for health and science.

Revised: Although scientists can now detect genetic predisposition to specific diseases, not everyone should be tested for these diseases.

3. A thesis should be **sharply focused**, not too vague. Avoid fuzzy hard to define word such as interesting, good or disgusting.

Too Vague: The way the TV show ER portrays doctors and nurses is interesting.

Revised: In dramatizing the experiences of doctors and nurses as they treat patients, navigate medial bureaucracy, and negotiate bioethical dilemmas, the TV show ER portrays health care professionals as unfailing caring and noble.

¹ Taken from: Hacker, Diana. The Writer's Reference. Sixth Edition. Pg. 16. C2-a

Handout 7: Drafting an Outline²

1. Put the thesis at the top.
2. Make items at the same level of generality as parallel as possible.
3. Use sentences unless phrases are clear.
4. Use the conventional system of numbers and letters for the levels of generality.
See sample on the reverse page.
5. Always use at least two subdivisions for a category.
6. Limit the number of major sections in the outline. Clustering of ideas into a few major categories may help.
7. Be flexible; in other words, be prepared to change your outline as your drafts evolve.

Keep the following in mind as you draft your outline:

- Try to envision a logical way in which to present your material.
- In what order will you present your material to best address the issues?
- Will you have to define any terms? If so, which ones?
- Will you have to clarify terms and concepts?
- Do you think that inserting anecdotal evidence, for example, will high profile stories of people who have had multiple births, help your reader understand your paper?
- Will you show opposing viewpoints? \Will you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the topic?
- Will you be comparing and contrasting?
- Will you be categorizing some information?

You may use a number of approaches to answer your research questions.

² Adapted from: Hacker, Diana. *The Writer's Reference*. Sixth Edition. Pg. 16. C2-a

Sample Outline³

Title "The Benefits of Running"

- I. Introduction
 - A. Running is becoming an extremely popular sport for all ages.
 - B. Running is a great form of exercise because it helps people control their weight, develop muscles, and improves mental and physical performance.
- II. Body
 - A. Weight control
 - 1. Aids self-control
 - 2. Burns calories
 - 3. Encourages a healthy diet
 - 4. Suppresses appetite
 - B. Muscular Development
 - 1. Improves tone
 - 2. Enhances contours
 - 3. Increases strength
 - 4. Improves endurance
 - C. Psychological well-being
 - 1. Aids sleep
 - 2. Inhibits depression
 - 3. Intensifies vitality
 - D. Cardiovascular Fitness
 - 1. Strengthens heart
 - 2. Lowers blood pressure
 - 3. Changes blood lipids
 - 4. Improves circulation
- III. Conclusion
 - A. Benefits of running make it an excellent exercise.
 - B. People who want to improve their health should consider running.

³ Taken from: <http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/writing/sampleoutline.html>

Handout 8: Online Writing Resources

Online Writing Labs

1. **Computers and Composition Online** <http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/home.htm>
2. **Purdue Owl** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Dictionaries, Style Manuals, and Grammar and Editing Sites

1. **Academic Word List.** <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/research/awl/>
2. **Ask Oxford** <http://www.askoxford.com/>
3. **Common Errors in English** <http://www.wsu.edu/%7Ebrians/errors/>
4. **Dictionary.com.** <http://www.dictionary.com>
5. **Multiple Dictionary Links All in One.** <http://www.onelook.com/>
6. **Roget's Thesaurus** http://humanities.uchicago.edu/forms_unrest/ROGET.html