

How to write a research paper-Undergraduate?

It's time to show off your amazing research skills and dazzle your audience with your knowledge of the past and your deft use of the English language. It's time for you to write a research paper.

Directions:

1. Choose a person or an event from U.S. History that took place between 1600 and 1870 as your topic. Your topic should not be too broad. Your topic must be verbally approved by me first.
2. Research your topic. You will need to use a variety of sources available from the library and internet. You'll need to take notes as you conduct your research.
3. Complete an outline of your paper. You will use this to organize the content of your paper and help you write. Please see the attached sample outline for use as a guide.
4. Write a paper on your topic and give it to me.
5. Include a properly formatted bibliography or works cited page. Use MLA format. You must use at least four (4) sources for your paper. The more sources, the more impressed I will be. At least two sources must be print sources such as a book or journal article.
6. Relax. (You can't do this one until you've completed the above tasks).

Some Guidelines: Your research paper should meet the following requirements:

1. Your paper should be **4-5 pages typed, doubled-spaced in either a Calibri 11 point, Times New Roman 12 point, or an Arial 10 point font.** You may only use black ink for the text of your paper. If you do not know what this means, please ask. You may also choose to *neatly* handwrite your paper on regular white loose-leaf notebook paper. If you decide to write your paper by hand, it must be 5-6 pages long, single-spaced. You may only use black or a dark blue ink. **Your bibliography is not included in the above page number requirements.** It is all right if you go a little over the length requirement.
2. If your paper is typed it must have *no more* than 1 inch margins all the way around the page. If you are unsure how to set margins, please ask. And yes, I will measure if necessary. If you handwrite your paper, you must use the red line on the left and write nearly to the right edge of the paper.
3. If you choose to include photographs, graphs, charts, or any other type of graphic in your paper they do not count as part of the length requirement, although they are still awesome. **Make sure to cite them properly.**
4. Your paper must have a title page with a title, your name, the date, and your class. This does not count as a page.
5. No report covers, folders, or bindings please. Your paper needs to be stapled in the upper left-hand corner and nowhere else.

6. There should be no spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors anywhere in your paper or the bibliography. Errors will count off your grade in all standard areas. Please proofread your paper. Have me proofread your paper, or your language arts teacher - someone. I'm not kidding here. Really. Proofread.

7. You must use formal language to write your paper. This means no contractions, text messaging abbreviations, etc. You should write in the third person – no *I, we, us, me, you, your,* etc.

8. You must turn in a properly formatted bibliography as the last page for your paper. It should be in MLA format. It must be in the same font, color, etc. as the rest of your paper. You must include the source of any photos or other images in you bibliography. You will lose significant points for doing this part incorrectly, so don't wait until 7:30 in the morning the day the paper is due to do this.

9. Did I mention you need to proofread your paper? Seriously. Proofread. Really.

Failure to meet any of the above requirements will negatively affect your grade.

Bibliographies: Your bibliography will need to be in the proper MLA format that your Language Arts teachers have taught you. There are examples on how to do this in your Language Arts books. Remember to record the following information *as you do your research*. This will be your working bibliography. You will use this to create your final bibliography that you turn in with your paper.

Title of book, article, web page, etc.

Author's name or names or Editor's name

Publisher

Copyright date

City and State (unless it's a big city, like New York or Chicago)

Date you last accessed a web site

Page numbers you used if from a book or magazine.

Plagiarism: Be sure the work you turn in is your own. Your paper should be written by you. If you use someone else's ideas you must properly quote or paraphrase the source, and give credit.

According to Plagiarism.org all of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit

- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

In you will use citations (either footnotes or endnotes) to give proper credit to any source you borrow ideas from. We will discuss this in class in more detail to make sure you understand how this works.

Visit [plagiarism.org](http://plagiarism.org/citing-sources/overview/) for more help on using citations: <http://plagiarism.org/citing-sources/overview/>

Important Dates:

April 2: Project is assigned.

April 4, 9, 10, 16, and May 1, 2 and 7 are project work days in the tech lab.

May 12: Papers due at beginning of class. No Exceptions. If you are going to be absent, you must turn the paper in early. You will lose one full letter grade for every school day you are late.

Rubric: Your paper will apply to the following standards.

Mark → Standard ↓	A	B/B+	C/C+	D/F
Standard II: History (50 points)	Your paper is excellent. You completely follow all guidelines and directions. You describe and explain elements of history thoroughly and in detail above the basic requirements and level of mastery.	You completely follow all guidelines and directions with few, if any, errors. You describe and explain elements of history thoroughly and in detail according to the requirements of this project.	You basically follow all of the guidelines and directions, but there are some errors or omissions. You describe and explain elements of history but not completely or entirely accurately.	You follow some of the guidelines and directions, but there are omissions or serious errors. You do not completely or accurately describe and explain elements of history.
Standard IX: Reads/Writes in the Content Area (50 points)	Your project is organized according to your outline. Your bibliography is complete and correct. You demonstrate excellent progress and organization of your research and materials.	Your project is organized according to your outline. Your bibliography is complete and correct with few, if any errors. You demonstrate adequate progress throughout the research process.	Your project is organized according to your outline. Your bibliography may contain more than two errors. You do not demonstrate good research progress.	Your project is not organized according to the outline provided or contains multiple errors. Your bibliography contains multiple errors. Your research progress is not acceptable.

Tips for Researching and Organizing Your Paper

Start by picking a topic. Research your topic. Take notes using note cards. Use your notes (note cards are best) to create your outline. As you write your rough draft, simply follow your completed outline. Start by writing your introduction and work your way through each point. By the time you start writing your rough draft, you'll find the hard work has already been done because you will have already thought about what you're going to say for each of your points.

Arranging Your Note Cards

As you research the topic for your report, you will create many note cards. Make sure to include the source of the information on the note card either by recording it on the back of the card or by using numbers that correspond to your working bibliography.

Heading or Topic	Author, title, page number
<p data-bbox="435 1073 1188 1150">One single fact, quotation, or paraphrase that you want to include in your paper goes here.</p>	

You need to organize your note cards before you begin writing the report. Begin by reading all the headings you used on the cards to indicate the contents of the notes. Group cards together that share the same or similar headings. Now you are ready to write an outline.

The Function of an Outline

An outline is a powerful tool that helps you organize your ideas. When you outline material, you place the ideas and facts you have collected in your research in a logical order. Outlining also gives you the opportunity to try different arrangements of ideas before you begin writing the paper.

Writing an Outline

To create a formal outline, you must follow a standard format. Use Roman numerals for main ideas. Use capital letters for outlining supporting ideas under each main idea. Use numbers for supporting details and lowercase letters for examples. Each level should have at least two entries and be indented from the level above. See the example below.

I. Main Idea

A. Secondary Idea (*This will be a paragraph*).

1. Supporting Detail

2. Supporting Detail

a. example

b. example

B. Secondary Idea (*This will be another paragraph*).

C. Secondary Idea (*This would be a third paragraph*).

A Sample Outline for Writing Your History Paper

In order to help you write your **Nice Big History Research Paper** ©, you can use an outline.

This will also help you as learn more about your topic, because you'll know exactly what you'll need to look for as you complete your final research. The following is a sample outline to use as a reference for creating your own. **It is just a guide.** Your outline and paper may be much longer or shorter than this. You may have more to talk about, or you may focus on just a couple of main points.

Paper Topic: What are some of the most important examples of George Washington's service and leadership in U.S. History? *This will be the theme or focus of your research. You might not know what other things you'll need to explore until you begin researching your topic. These will become your investigative questions.*

- I. **Introduction** – *Tells the reader what your paper is about and usually ends with your topic sentence (or thesis). This is the research question or topic you have chosen.*

Whenever someone looks at the great leaders of American history, the name of George Washington will inevitably be at the top of the list. George Washington gave the majority of his adult life in service to the United States, even when he would have preferred not to. George Washington's life of leadership and service to the people of this land can be divided into three periods of his life: his service during the French and Indian War (*Main idea #1*), his time as the commander in Chief of the Continental Army (*Main idea #2*), and his two terms as America's first president (*Main idea #3*). This paper will look at these three periods and some examples of Washington's most important experiences and accomplishments.

- II. **Service during the French and Indian War** – *The body paragraphs, or sections, talk about your paper’s main points in the order listed in the Introduction. Each section will discuss one of your investigative questions that you researched. Each number or letter should be its own paragraph.*
 - A. **Mission to the Ohio Valley**
 - B. **Fort Necessity**

- III. **Time as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army** – *This would be my second investigative question or topic.*
 - A. **Defeat at New York 1776**
 - B. **Valley Forge**
 - C. **Victory at Yorktown**

- IV. **His Presidency** – *This is my third investigative question or topic.*
 - A. **Establishing Precedents** – *In my paper, this would be a paragraph that explains that Washington set precedents for the presidency.*
 - 1. **Cabinet Meetings** – *This would be another paragraph that discusses Washington’s weekly cabinet meetings as an example of a precedent.*
 - 2. **Two Terms**
 - B. **Farewell Address**
 - 1. **No Debt**
 - 2. **No Foreign Alliances**
 - 3. **No Political Parties**

- V. **Conclusion** – *Sums up what you have written. Restates your topic sentence in a new way and includes any final thoughts you might like to share. Do not introduce any new ideas in your conclusion.*