Social Studies Department

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Table of Contents

What is a research paper .................................................................3
   Expectations ........................................................................4

Part I: Choosing the Topic and
   Writing the Thesis Statement ...........................................5
   Examples of Thesis Statements .............................................5
   Formulating an Effective Thesis Statement .................................6
   Evaluating a Thesis Statement Worksheet .................................7
   Samples ............................................................................8

Part II: Finding Sources for your Research Paper .........................9
   Secondary Sources ................................................................9
   Primary Sources ..................................................................9
   Internet Myths: Unreliable Sources .........................................10–11

Part III: Organization of Notes ....................................................12

Part IV: Writing an Outline .......................................................13
   9th Grade Outline Template ...............................................13–14
   10th and 11th Grade Outline Template ....................................14

Part V: Plagiarism .....................................................................15
   The Art of Introducing Quotations .........................................16
   The Art of Paraphrasing ........................................................17

Part VI: Introduction to Footnotes .............................................18

Part VII: Bibliography ...............................................................19

Part VIII: General Format of the Research Paper .........................20–21
What is a research paper?

“A research paper is a written [document] that presents the results of a purposeful, focused, in-depth study of a specific topic. Its writer chooses a topic, gathers information about the topic from several different sources, and then presents that information in an organized way.”¹ The way that the student presents his/her information is through a well thought out, clearly stated argument that is focused on a thesis statement. This argument should address the student’s point of view as well as address the counterpoint of that argument which is all supported by historical evidence.

Why am I writing a research paper?

● Writing research papers is a way to engage in the authentic work of historians.²
● Writing research papers is a proven and effective way to develop the following skills:
  ● Read critically
  ● Think analytically
  ● Argue persuasively
  ● Write clearly³
  ● Make judgments
  ● Interpret information
● All of these skills are necessary for real world success in all life paths

How will I be graded on my research paper?

● All papers will be graded on the following criteria, which are derived from the School Wide Writing Rubric and common Social Studies department expectations:
  ● must have an original and arguable thesis statement
  ● thesis is fully developed with specific analysis of evidence
  ● must be organized in a logical manner
  ● consistently employs proper grammar and mechanics, polished and varied sentence structure, and demonstrates effective word choice
  ● conclusion clearly links all main points back to the thesis statement and explains the significance of the topic
  ● paper should be properly formatted (including citations and bibliography) according to the Research Paper Writing Guide
● Individual teachers will specify additional criteria and assign their own point value to the different criteria.

Expectations

Listed below are the general expectations of research assignments in each of your three history courses. Notice the expectations increase each year as you further develop and refine your writing and thinking skills.

Your teacher will provide an assignment guide with more specific expectations including a rubric. Note that the required length assigned may vary depending on course level and instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>World History 9th Grade</th>
<th>U.S. History 1 10th Grade</th>
<th>U.S. History 2 11th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly stated thesis statement</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis development with logical arguments</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of sources that support thesis</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format followed from manual</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>2-3 pages (5 or more paragraphs)</td>
<td>3-4 pages (8 or more paragraphs)</td>
<td>4-5 pages (8 or more paragraphs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part I: Choosing the Topic and Writing the Thesis Statement

What topic should I write about?
- Examine closely the subject you have been assigned by your teacher to research.
- Narrow your focus to a topic that you will be able to properly address within the requirements of the paper.
- Ask yourself “What do I want to know?” In other words, determine an aspect of the topic you want to research more closely.
- Answer/Create a research question that you will answer in your paper.

Example:
- Subject: Slavery and the Civil War
- Narrow focus: Freed slaves’ involvement in the war.
- What I want to know: The role and treatment of freed slaves during the war.
- Research Question: What role did freed slaves play in Union regiments, and how were black soldiers treated by their white commanders?

What is a thesis statement?
- Your history paper will take the form of an argument in support of a thesis statement.
- A thesis statement:
  - proposes an answer to a question you have created as a result of your research and
  - is a conclusion that a reader might disagree with but can be supported by evidence from historical sources.
- A thesis statement is NOT:
  - a description of your paper topic
  - a question
  - a statement of fact or
  - a statement of opinion that cannot be proven.

Examples of thesis statements:
- **Question:** What role did women play in the development of the textile industry in early American industrialization?
- **Thesis:** Women workers were not just laborers exploited by the mill owners but were actively engaged in expanding the opportunities for women in the workforce.

- **Question:** What role did nonviolence resistance play in the Indian independence movement?
- **Thesis:** From the moment Mohandas Gandhi decided to respond to force with acts of civil disobedience, British rule of India was doomed; his indictment of British colonial policy in the court of public opinion did far more damage to the British military than any weapon could.

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4 Ibid, 70.
6 Rampolla, 48.
**How do I write a thesis statement?**

- Before you can write an effective thesis statement you need to do some basic research. Begin by looking through your textbook and other relevant sources.
- Write a 1-2 sentence statement in which you answer your research question.
- From this point on, your research should center on this statement.
- All of the sources you plan to include in your paper should provide evidence to support your thesis statement.

**What if I am wrong?**

- Keep in mind that the thesis at this stage in the process is a *working* thesis.
- As you gather, read, and evaluate sources, it is important to remain flexible and be willing to modify your thesis in response to your research.

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### Formulating an Effective Thesis Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If…</th>
<th>Then…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your “thesis” statement simply repeats the topic you are writing about</td>
<td>It is <em>not</em> a thesis!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your “thesis” statement poses a question without proposing an answer</td>
<td>It is <em>not</em> a thesis!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your “thesis” statement is a fact or a series of facts</td>
<td>It is <em>not</em> a thesis!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your “thesis” statement simply reflects a personal belief or preference</td>
<td>It is <em>not</em> a thesis!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your “thesis” statement answers a question, is a conclusion that a reader might disagree with, and can be supported by evidence from sources</td>
<td>It <em>is</em> a thesis!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7 Ibid, 48-49.
Evaluating a Thesis Statement Worksheet

1. Does this thesis statement address the assignment and is it clear?
   ____yes  ____no

   (What clarifications does it need?)

2. Does this thesis take a position that others might challenge or oppose?
   ____yes  ____no

   (If the thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.)

3. Is this thesis statement specific enough?
   ____yes  ____no

   (Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something "good"; what specifically makes something "successful"?)

4. Does this thesis pass the "So what?" test?
   ____yes  ____no

   (If a reader's first response is, "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.)

5. Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test?
   ____yes  ____no

   (If a reader's first response is "how?" or "why?" your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.)
Sample: Choosing the Topic and Writing the Thesis Statement

What topic should I write about?
- Subject: Industrialization
- Narrow focus: Industrialization and railroads during the 1800s in Great Britain
- What I want to know: The types of changes and impacts railroads made.
- Research Question: What type of impact did railroads have socially and economically on Great Britain during the 1800s?

What will my thesis statement be?
- After I read my textbook and a couple of other sources I can write my thesis statement.
- Thesis statement: Of all the technological developments during the Industrial Revolution, the invention and expansion of the railroads had the greatest impact. The growth of the railroad industry led to improved commerce and travel, the creation of jobs, and increased urbanization.

How do I know if my thesis statement is effective and appropriate?
- Check your thesis statement with the “Formulating an Effective Thesis Statement” and “Evaluating a Thesis Statement” worksheets.
- If your thesis passed the “tests,” including earning your teacher’s approval, then you are ready to move on to the next stage in the research paper process!

Note: This research paper guide will utilize the above thesis statement and topic throughout the rest of the guide as an example.
Part II: Finding Sources for your Research Paper

It is important to recognize the type of source that you are utilizing, as well as the types of sources that your teacher expects. The two main types of sources are listed below, along with where/how to find these sources. It is important to remember to use a variety of sources including print sources (like books and newspapers), websites, scholarly journals, etc.

**Secondary Sources** are written by people (most often historians) not present at the original event who research, examine, and interpret primary sources. They are written after the event happened. They often combine information from a number of different accounts. Secondary sources include history books, historical essays, and bibliographies (to name a few). Secondary sources are the easiest type of sources to access.

*Where can I find secondary sources?*

- The school and local town libraries have reference sections
- Books about history can be found in the 900s section
- Other sources may be found in the 300s and 100s
- *Do not be afraid to ask a librarian for help!*

**Primary Sources** are written or created by people who lived during a historical event. The writers may have been either participants or observers. Primary sources include letters, diaries, journals, speeches, newspaper articles, magazine articles, eyewitness accounts, and autobiographies. Primary sources also include visual images created at the time, such as paintings, photographs, and video. Talk with your teacher about these sources for further guidance.

*Where can I find primary sources?*

- Special collections sections of libraries, local historical societies, old newspapers and periodicals can all be found in print in your community.
- *The easiest way to find primary source is online. See next section for information on Internet Myths.*

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9 Ibid., R22.
Internet Myths: Unreliable Sources

Wiki and New World Encyclopedia

Any website that contains the term “WIKI” is not a reliable source. The term wiki means “a collaborative website whose content can be edited by anyone who has access to it.” Due to the fact that anyone can enter information into a wiki, it is impossible to know if the information is reliable.

Although Wikipedia.org has fact checkers, Wikipedia encourages all readers to add information to the pages at all times; if it is wrong, it can be changed later. You do not want to be the person who has the wrong information because it had not yet been changed!

New World Encyclopedia is also a website that is written by online collaborators. You cannot rely on this information to be accurate! Do not use either site for research.

Google and Ask.com

Google is not a source! Google is a search engine, the purpose of Google is to connect you with the information that you need. You would not cite a librarian who directed you to a bookshelf in the library, so please do not cite Google because Google did not provide you with information about your topic, the websites that you clicked on connected you to that information.

Another thing to remember about Google is that it is a .com website. This means that Google is a company that makes a profit. Other websites pay Google to come up as one of the first few links. These are called Sponsored Links, and are set apart. Like Google, Ask.com is a commercial search engine.

About.com

According to the About.com website, it is an “online neighborhood of hundreds of helpful experts, eager to share their wealth of knowledge of visitors…and one of the largest producers of original content on the Web.” About.com is edited by guides, yet none of the articles explicitly states who the guide on that article was. Therefore, you must be skeptical. Most entries contain bibliographies and outside sources. Go to those sources, and evaluate the information.

Blogs


Anybody can write a blog about anything. Blogs are personal accounts and opinions of anything in the world. Because there is no “quality” control, blogs cannot be reliable sources of information, the sources do not have to be correct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Images</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are lots of websites on the internet that contain visual depictions of historical events. Some sites are reliable, and some are not. Be aware of sites like Flickr.com and Picassa.com that allow users to post their own pictures. If you are looking for historical images, go to a reliable website and use their images. Even images must be cited!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part III: Organization of Notes

The most important part of writing a research paper is keeping your information and thoughts organized. There are many ways to do this including using a note card system, EasyBib notes, Power Point notes or structured research notes in a Google Doc. Any of these methods will help you write a better paper.

Why take notes:
Based on your thesis statement, you will need to categorize the information from your sources into supporting arguments. Later, when you begin to write your paper, each supporting argument becomes a body paragraph in your paper. As you come across facts, quotes, data and other relevant information that supports your thesis, you should write them down. Each sentence or idea that you find should be paraphrased (summarized in your own words) unless you are using a direct quote. In order to keep your ideas in order, and to remember where you found the ideas, follow these guidelines for taking notes:

- Copy the source citation from your EasyBib bibliography
- Create a title/header based on your supporting arguments (body paragraphs) that links the source back to your thesis
- Paraphrasing: Use your own words when taking notes. It may help to close the book and explain to yourself what the author has written, then transfer that “explanation” to your note card. You do not need to write in complete sentences.
- Direct Quotations: Direct quotations should be used for unique phrases from secondary sources or vital information that cannot be reworded/paraphrased from a primary source. Enclose direct quotations in quotation marks. If you are writing a direct quotation, be sure you have quoted word for word, exactly as the author wrote it. If you wish to leave out material from the quoted passage—a sentence or phrase or even a single word—you must show that you have done so by inserting ellipses (…) at the appropriate point. Direct quotes should be no more than two lines long.
- If you using a book, write the page number(s) where you found the information or direct quote.
Part IV: Writing an Outline

An outline serves as a guide to the writing process and provides an overview of the content of your paper. Using your note cards, Excel spreadsheet, or structured research notes, this is when you can either omit or add topics.\(^\text{13}\)

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 lower case letters for examples. Each level should have at least two entries and be indented from the level above.\(^\text{14}\) See the example below.

9th Grade Outline Template

I. Intro
   A. Time Period and Place
   B. Background Information/Major Events/People
   C. Thesis Statement

II. Supporting Argument from Thesis Statement
   A. Factual Background and Analysis
      1. Supporting Details and Relevant Historical Information
         a. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources
         b. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources
      2. Significance of Facts Above
         a. Explain how it relates to and proves your thesis

III. Supporting Argument from Thesis Statement
   A. Factual Background and Analysis
      1. Supporting Details and Relevant Historical Information
         a. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources
         b. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources
      2. Significance of Facts Above
         a. Explain how it relates to and proves your thesis

\(^\text{13}\) Writing for Social Studies (Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell, 2008), 72.

\(^\text{14}\) Ibid, 73.
IV. Supporting Argument from Thesis Statement
   A. Factual Background and Analysis
      1. Supporting Details and Relevant Historical Information
         a. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources
         b. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources
      2. Significance of Facts Above
         a. Explain how it relates to and proves your thesis

V. Conclusion
   A. Restate Thesis Statement
   B. Summarize main arguments
   C. Explain the overall historical significance as it relates to your thesis

10th and 11th Grade Outline Template

I. Intro
   A. Time Period and Place
   B. Background Information/Major Events/People
   C. Thesis Statement

II. Supporting Argument from Thesis Statement
   A. Factual Background (Paragraph 1)
      1. Supporting Details and Relevant Historical Information
      2. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources
   B. Analysis (Paragraph 2)
      1. Significance of Facts Above
      2. Explain how it relates to and proves your thesis
      3. Evidence, Examples, Quotes or Paraphrases from Sources to further support your argument

III. Repeat II. A. and B. for each of your supporting arguments

IV. Conclusion
   A. Restate Thesis Statement
   B. Summarize main arguments
   C. Explain the overall historical significance as it relates to your thesis

Even after you have completed your outline, do not throw away any notes that now seem unnecessary. You are still in the planning stages of your research paper. As you continue to develop your work, you may wish to add a piece of information you originally eliminated. You may also acquire more information to include in your outline to make your paper better. Remember, you will also need to refer to your notes for your footnotes and bibliography.
Part V: Plagiarism

*What is plagiarism?*

- Plagiarize: To use and pass off (the ideas or writings of another) as one’s own.\(^{15}\)
- Sometimes plagiarism is done intentionally and other times it can be done accidentally. Regardless, it is something that you need to pay close attention to because there can be serious penalties involved, such as loss of credit for the assignment and discipline. See the student handbook for the school wide policy.
- See the sections on sources and footnotes for information on how to properly cite your sources in your paper and create a bibliography.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You Need To Cite</th>
<th>You Don’t Need To Cite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct quotations</td>
<td>Your own original ideas or opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions and ideas of others - Even if paraphrased (stated in your own words)</td>
<td>General information and common knowledge such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique words or phrases from a source</td>
<td>o George Washington was the first president of the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics not commonly known</td>
<td>o The United States fought against Germany, Italy, and Japan during WWII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charts, maps, other visuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*When in doubt- CITE IT!*  
Ignorance about what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse!

**Scenarios:** Read the following scenarios and determine if they are considered plagiarism.\(^{16}\)

- A student borrows a friend’s essay to get some ideas for his own paper. With his friend’s permission, he copies portions of it, taking care, however, to cite all the sources his friend included in the original.
- A student finds useful information on a website that is not under copyright. She downloads and incorporates sections of this website into her paper, but does not cite it since it is in the public domain.


\(^{16}\) Rampolla, 89.
• A student derives some key ideas for his paper from a book. Since he does not quote anything directly from this book, he does not provide any footnotes. He does, however, include the book in his bibliography.

• A student modifies the original text by changing some words, leaving out an example, and rearranging the order of the material. Since she is not using the exact words of the original, she does not include a footnote.

_The answer is that all four of these scenarios are examples of plagiarism_

**The Art of Introducing Quotations:**

Quote only sentences, passages, or words that are especially succinct, memorable, or powerful. Save direct quotations for brilliant comments, controversial statements, certain statistics, and personal testimony that you believe will strengthen your argument.

If a quotation is long, or if you can say it better or more concisely, paraphrase it (restate it in your own words). Remember, you must indicate a source (use a footnote) even when paraphrasing. Keep paraphrasing to a minimum because it is your ideas, your argument that counts to convince your readers.

Always integrate quotations into your text. NEVER DROP A QUOTATION IN YOUR ESSAY! Don't forget to correctly site the source using a footnote. Shown below are some possible ways to introduce quotations.

• _You can use a full sentence followed by a colon to introduce a quotation._

Examples: The setting emphasizes deception: "Nothing is as it appears".  
Piercy ends the poem on an ironic note: "To every woman a happy ending"

• _You can also begin a sentence with your own words, then complete it with quoted words._

Example: Churchill wanted to encourage the people of Great Britain when he said, “We Shall fight them on the Beaches”.

• _To quote a critic or researcher, you can use an introductory phrase naming the source, followed by a comma._

Examples: According to Smith, "[W]riting is fun".  
In Smith's words, "..."  
In Smith's view, "..."

• _Another way to introduce a critic's words is to use a descriptive verb, followed by a comma. Avoid using says unless the words were originally spoken aloud, for instance, during an interview._

Examples: Smith states (remarks, writes, notes, comments, observes, concludes, reports, maintains, adds), "This book is terrific".
If your lead-in to the quotation ends in *that or as*, don't follow it with a comma. The first letter of the quotation should be lower case.

Examples: Smith points out (argues, emphasizes) that "millions of students would like to burn this book"
Smith interprets the hand washing in MacBeth as "an attempt at absolution".
Smith describes the novel as "a celebration of human experience".

**The Art of Paraphrasing**

A paraphrase directly reflects the ideas of an author. When you write your paper, you may use paraphrases as long as you cite them. Even so, paraphrasing must be done carefully.

To avoid this form of plagiarism, compare the following passage from J. Joseph Hutchmaker and Warren I. Sussman, eds., Wilson's Diplomacy: An International Symposium (Cambridge, MA: Schenckman, 1973), 13, with the two examples of paraphrasing that follow it. Paraphrase A constitutes plagiarism; paraphrase B does not. The subject is the diplomacy of Woodrow Wilson. Here is the original text:

> Wilson took personal responsibility for the conduct of the important diplomacy of the United States chiefly because he believed that it was wise, right, and necessary for him to do so. Believing as he did that the people had temporarily vested their sovereignty in foreign affairs in him, he could not delegate responsibility in this field to any individual. His scholarly training and self-disciplined habits of work made him so much more efficient than his advisors that he must have thought that the most economical way of doing important diplomatic business was for him to do it himself. Experience in dealing with subordinates who sometimes tried to defeat his purposes also led him to conclude that it was the safest method, for he, and not his subordinates, bore the responsibility to the American people and to history for the consequences of his policies.

PARAPHRASE A: Wilson took personal responsibility for conducting diplomacy because he believed it was right for him to do so. Believing that the people had vested their sovereignty in foreign affairs in him, he couldn’t delegate this responsibility. His scholarly training and self-discipline made him more efficient than his advisors. He thought that the most economical way of doing important business was to do it himself. Experience in dealing with the subordinates who sometimes tried to defeat his purposes led him to conclude that it was the safest method because he bore responsibility to the American people for the consequences.

PARAPHRASE B: Wilson felt personally responsible for major diplomacy because he believed that the voters had entrusted him with such matters. He felt he was more capable than his advisors in this area. He, and not his advisors, was responsible to the people.

Paraphrase A is too close to the original. The underlined phrases are almost the same as those of the source. If they were used in a paper without quotation marks, they would constitute plagiarism. Rather than recording the main points of the passage, this paraphrase repeats much of the text word for word. The unacknowledged use of the author’s wording constitutes plagiarism.

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17 Benjamin, 116-117.
Paraphrase B records only the principal point of the passage. It does not copy phrases from the original text. This avoids plagiarism but conveys the central idea of the passage. Remember, that paraphrase B still needs to be footnoted because it incorporates ideas taken from the source.

Part VI: Introduction to Footnotes

In the Chicago Notes-Bibliography (NB) system, you should include a footnote each time you use a source, whether through a direct quote or through a paraphrase...footnotes will be compiled at the bottom of each page. It is extremely important to credit your sources to avoid plagiarism.

Situations requiring Citations

- When you quote exact words from a source
- When you paraphrase ideas that are associated with a specific source, even if you do not quote exact words from it
- When you use any idea, data, or method attributed to any source you have consulted
- Remember to introduce your direct quotes and to let the reader know whether it is a primary or secondary source.

Position of numbers. Note reference numbers in text are set as superior (superscript) numbers. In the notes themselves, they are normally full size, not raised and followed by a period.

In text

“Nonrestrictive relative clauses are parenthetic, as are similar clauses introduced by conjunctions indicating time or place.”

Footnote


The first note for each source should include all relevant information about the source. If you cite the same source again, the note need only include the last name of the author and page number(s) cited. If you cite the same source and page number(s) from a single source two or more times consecutively, the corresponding note should use the word ‘Ibid.,’ an abbreviated form of the Latin ‘ibidem,’ which means ‘in the same place.’ If you use the same source but a different page number, the corresponding note should use ‘Ibid.’ followed by a comma and the new page number(s).

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20 The Owl, (accessed June 18, 2009).
Part VII: Bibliography

It is necessary to list sources at the end of the paper in a bibliography. That list includes every source you cited in a footnote and sometimes others you consulted but did not cite. Each bibliography entry includes the same information contained in an footnote, but in a slightly different form:


Creating a bibliography: You have access to EasyBib through the school library website. Utilize EasyBib to build your bibliography. You must select the “Chicago/Turabian style” before creating your bibliography to ensure that it is in the proper format.

Order of elements: Bibliography entries are arranged in alphabetical order by the last name of the author, editor, or whoever is first in each entry. If your bibliography includes two or more works written, edited, or translated by the same individual, arrange the entries alphabetically by title (ignoring articles such as *a* or *the*).21

Indentation and Spacing: Bibliography entries have a hanging indentation: the first line is flush left and all following lines are indented ½ inch or 5 spaces (the same as paragraphs). Single-space each entry and double-space between entries.

Part VIII: General Format of the Research Paper

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21 Turabian, 148.
Margins: Leave a margin of one inch on all four edges of the page

Font: Times Roman 12 pt. (10 pt. for footnotes)

Spacing and Indentation: Double-space all text in papers except the following items, which should be single-spaced:
- Footnotes
- Bibliography entries

Pagination: Number pages in the paper, including title page and bibliography, justified right in the header with your last name comma page number. Please note that the title page and bibliography do not count toward your minimum page requirement.

Quotations: Direct quotations should not exceed two lines of information copied from the source.

Contractions: Contractions are not used in formal writing. Isn’t should be written as is not.

1st or 2nd Personal Pronouns: Do not use 1st or 2nd personal pronouns (e.g. I, we, you, me, us, our…).
Appendixes: If your paper includes essential supporting material that cannot be easily worked into the body of your paper, put the material in one or more appendixes in the back of your paper. Or if you have cited works of art or photographs they should also be included in the appendix. Title the page Appendix.
Research Paper Manual Bibliography


