

## **APSU Writing Center**

### **Writing a Research Paper**

#### **Research Paper**

A **research paper** lets you explore a topic you're curious about while showing what you've learned. You'll use your own thinking along with information from trustworthy sources to explain or argue a point.

#### **Choosing a Topic**

- Start with your assignment sheet. Read it carefully to understand what is required.
- Choose a topic you find interesting or enjoyable.
- Brainstorm your ideas by webmapping or explaining your topic to a friend.

#### **Finding Resources**

- Use your library databases to find credible information.
- Narrow your search by using specific keywords.
  - **Example:** Instead of searching “climate change,” try “climate change and coastal erosion” or “climate change impact on coral reefs.”
- Evaluate your sources by keeping only those that are relevant to your topic.
- Cite your sources as you go by writing down main ideas and keeping track of quotes.

#### **Developing a Thesis Statement**

- Establish a thesis statement that explains the paper's main idea or argument.
- Focus your argument so it is specific, arguable, and concise.
- Clarify your position or answer to the question you are addressing.
- Connect each body paragraph of your writing back to the thesis statement.

#### **Creating an Outline**

- Acts as a blueprint for your paper and keeps your writing organized.
- Helps you plan the order of your ideas before you start writing.
- Serves as a roadmap connecting your introduction to your conclusion.

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#### **Writing the Paper**

- Freewrite your ideas and let them flow without worrying about grammar or structure. It's easier to edit a full page than a blank one!
- Focus on one paragraph at a time.
- Don't aim for perfection right away, get your ideas written down first.
- Use transitions between paragraphs to help your paper flow smoothly from one idea to the next.

#### **Introduction**

- Present your thesis and main topic.
- Explain the purpose and focus of your paper.
- Provide background information or key concepts your reader needs to understand about the topic.

#### **Body Paragraphs**

- Present your main arguments and support them with evidence and citations.
- Summarize, analyze, and explain how the citations connect to your thesis rather than simply adding quotes.
- Use topic sentences to introduce each paragraph and guide readers through your ideas.

#### **Conclusion**

- Rewrite your thesis in new words.
- Summarize your key points and explain why your citations matter.
- Connect back to your introduction or suggest areas for future research or discussion.

#### **Revising and Editing**

- Take a break and then revise as you will be more likely to catch your mistakes.
- Get feedback with a classmate or a writing center tutor to offer outside perspectives.

#### **Questions to Consider:**

- Does my paper flow logically from start to finish?
- Are my ideas clearly connected with smooth transitions?
- Is my thesis supported throughout the paper?
- Are spelling, grammar, and word choice correct?

**APSU Writing Center**  
Research Paper Outline

**Title:**

**Due Date:**

**Course:**

**Instructor:**

**Introduction:** (Introduce your topic, explain why your research is important, and state your thesis.)

**Paragraph 1:** (Present your first main argument and use evidence to support it.)

**Paragraph 2:** (Present your second main argument and use evidence to support it.)

**Paragraph 3:** (Present your third main argument and use evidence to support it.)

**Conclusion:** (Summarize your points, rewrite your thesis in a new way, and explain why the research matters.)



## APSU Writing Center

### References

Liou, K. (2022). *Research Paper Writing Process*. San José State University Writing Center.

<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Research%20Paper%20Writing%20Process-Updated.pdf>

Northern Michigan University Writing Center. (2025). *Writing a Research Paper*. Northern Michigan University. <https://nmu.edu/writingcenter/tips-writing-research-paper>

University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center. (2025). *Writing a Research Paper*. <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/planresearchpaper/>