

# Essays & Term PAPERS

## Paper Basics

### Choosing the Topic

There are essentially two major types of topics you can choose: **Expository** and **Interpretive**.

#### A. Expository and Factual

1. Expository or descriptive something. "What can be an essay, a poem, an historical object, a book, a movie, etc., or any combination of those things."
2. Requires fact finding and research.
  - a. The most important word being "fact."
  - b. Everything in such a paper must be accurate and documented.
    1. There is no issue in an expository/factual topic for opinions.
    2. E.g., a newspaper such as "William Shakespeare's play Hamlet is the best play ever written in English" would be wrong. However, "Many scholars have named the William Shakespeare's Hamlet as the best play ever written in English" would be permissible if you can document this.

#### B. Interpretive

Interpretive involves feelings or interpretations. Herein, the response "William Shakespeare's play Hamlet is the best play ever written in the English language" would be acceptable. "My sense, however, that 'power' the statement. But the 'power' word may be on the mind of scholars, or experts. It can be found in your own feelings about the piece.

### Picking a Subject

- A. A topic should interest you and be manageable in terms of resources available. Research includes both the materials you can find about the topic and the time available to use those to produce the paper.
- B. The topic must be **focused and well-defined**.
  1. Avoid general topics such as "The History of the American Car."
  2. Focus on something specific, such as "How Henry Ford made the American car available to the masses."
  3. It is better to do a good job on a simple topic instead of a poor job on a complex topic. Remember, a good or poor result may have nothing to do with either the quality of your writing skills or the techniques you present in the paper. Of much greater importance is whether you have sufficiently covered the topic in depth.
- C. Make sure your teacher approves the topic.
  1. This should be a "no-brainer," but many students do a great deal of work on a project only to have it rejected by the teacher for any number of reasons.
  2. If your teacher does reject the project, don't fight it. You will have many opportunities to do to take a stand when your final grade isn't as high as you want.

D. Be prepared to change your topic if you proceed with one research. As you research a topic, you may find that your original topic presents a problem.

1. "There is not the enough material available on the subject."
2. There may be too much material on the subject for you to do in justice in the time available.
3. In an interpretive/expressive paper, the material you discover may cause you to change your interpretation or opinion.
4. Start early. As you proceed, you may find that you need further background in a paper, the more likely it is that either the materials you need, or the time for research writing will be unavailable.

### Style

- A. Follow instructions.

Notes: The following is a checklist of the items required on your papers. Come to the class for help if you need an answer.

1. Focus/thesis
2. Bibliography
3. Length of paper
4. Appendix

## Paper Basics continued

5. Table of contents
6. Title page
7. Index
8. Single space or double space

### Approach

- A. **Descriptive approach** - Write about a thing, a person, or an issue, such as: "The Russian Revolution in Russia." You would detail the struggle, its effects on Russia, China, communism, etc.
- B. **Explanatory approach** - Explain why or how something happened such as "Why the Mississippi River Flooded in 1993." You would explain the scientific process and theories about weather and other causes.
- C. **Argumentative approach** - Example: "NED Education should be Mandatory in High School."
  1. First you can offer opinion, anecdotal evidence, etc.
  2. **Important** As you move from **Descriptive** to **Explanatory** to **Argumentative**, the material you need to include in the paper becomes cumulative.
    - a. You cannot take an Explanatory approach without including Descriptive material.
    - b. You cannot take an Argumentative approach without including both Explanatory and Descriptive material.
    - c. How much of each you include will be dictated by the prescribed length of the paper and the amount of material you feel necessary to prove or disprove an argument.

## Research & Documentation

Efficient research requires a search strategy and ability to take notes.

There are two methods of research, **Primary** and **Necessary**.

- A. **Primary Research** is the direct experience of creating information.
  1. Personally interview people with expertise in the field you are writing about or with knowledge of the topic.
  2. Conduct observations in person/observe your theory.
  3. In some instances, the writer may be subject over primary source. For example, a paragraph on the "atomic bomb" about his experience.
- B. **Necessary Research** - The most common form of research involves finding what others have said on a topic.
  1. This can take many forms, reading about your topic being the most obvious.
  2. Other forms include viewing films/videos on a video, listening to recordings of speeches/music, etc.
  3. The more readily available control of all the information in the library, although more and more frequently students are also using the Internet.

Notes: It is only as very new information that a teacher will allow a student paper to be based on such a source. It should be on just what the experience is not of such significance as to have greater depth for others.

## Search Strategy

### A. Object

1. Survey the library and other media materials on the topic. There can be books, books available on price and book other sources on CD-ROMs, Internet sources, radio, and on occasion, personal interviews.
2. Get information about your topic.
3. Complete a working bibliography.

### B. Sources

Notes: Limit to the most current and the steps for finding print information on the library. In most cases, research via computer sources can be considered as research. Unless through more libraries. Check with your library.

## Search Strategy continued

1. General reference works such as encyclopedias, yearbooks, almanacs.
  - a. Encyclopedias articles give an overview and refer to books and journal articles.
  - b. Most yearbook articles are general encyclopedias.
  - c. Take note of the **abstracts** of books and magazine articles on the topic. Make a list of those sources that will be useful.
2. Specialized reference works are found by using guides such as *Cogswell P. Moore's Guide to Reference Works*.
  - a. Every area of knowledge has its own special reference works.
  - b. Not every reference work will be in your library.
  - c. Specialized guides, such as the *Research Guide to Periodical Literature* the *Social Sciences Index*, the *Biological Index* and others, depending on the nature of your topic, are good sources of bibliography.
3. **Working Bibliography**
  1. Use 2nd index cards or, in computer, record the author and title of each book, you want to examine.
  2. Arrange cards alphabetically by author and look up each number in card catalog or on-line catalog. Call numbers will allow to find books in library.

## Taking Notes

### A. Process

1. Organize your notes and read books and articles.
2. Organized bibliography of sources with full name of author, complete title, edition statement, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, and number of volumes.
3. Record page numbers of sources from which you take notes.
4. For articles, record full name of magazine being consulted, its volume number or "issue" number, month and year number, complete page numbers of article, and author of article.
5. Recording full information now will save time later.

### B. Necessary is Essential

1. Continuously follow into flow of note taking.
2. Each note consists of one item of information.
3. Write the notes in your own words. If you quote on only a phrase, do it accurately and enclose it within quotation marks.

### C. Systems

1. Taking notes on 3 x 5 cards is recommended.
  - a. Some writers prefer the larger 4 x 6 cards.
  - b. Record the author, title, and page number of the source of the note on each card.
    - i. This may prove easy for author and title.
    - ii. Use only one side of each card.
2. Notes can also be made in **bound notebooks**. Use only one side of paper so that separate notes can be cut out and put into topical index when writing the topic paper.
3. Computers facilitate note-taking and preparing the notes paper.
  - a. Different programs have different features.
  - b. Always record the number of each note and always use quotation marks to indicate what you have copied.

## Documentation

### Background

- A. Identify your sources of information.
- B. Most different technical aspects of term papers. Information sources are complete.
- C. There are different styles of documentation.
  1. One style is traditionally used for papers in the sciences.

# Essays Term Papers Quickstudy Academic

**Wolfgang Guggemos**



**Essays Term Papers Quickstudy Academic:**

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