Writing the Research Paper

Adapted from “Writing the Research Paper” pp. 317-326
From Write for College: A Student Handbook
PART ONE
A Compelling Research Paper

• One of your **finest achievements** as a student...
• Demands you to **apply many skills**...
  • Thinking, speaking, reading, and writing
• Challenges you to **take charge of your own learning**...
  • Your topic, your curiosity, and your energy that make things happen!
• Requires **effective time management**
  • Many steps and stages involved in the process...
WHAT’S AHEAD

• Research Overview
• Steps in the Process
Research Overview

Starting Point
Purpose
Form
Audience
Voice
Point of View
Starting Point

- Assignment usually relates to a course concept.
  - 1) Consider what the instructor wants you to learn
  - 2) Then take ownership.
Purpose

- To establish and support a position worth sharing with others.
Form

An Extended Essay with:

- Thesis
- Supporting paragraphs
- Thoughtful conclusion
- Integrated sources
- Careful documentation

See Major Jones’ “Short Paper Guidelines.”
Audience

*Your Instructor and Peers*
Voice

- Formal or semiformal
- Thoughtful confident tone
- Your research paper has made you somewhat of an authority on the topic.
Point of View

• In most cases, instructor will want you to:
  • *Remain objective*
  • *Keep the focus on the TOPIC*
  • *Not written in first person (no “I” in paper)*

• Another form is the “I-Search paper”:
  • Personal, more of a story of the researcher’s searching adventure; written in first person (with “I” in the paper)
Final Note:

- **The BEST research** centers on:
  
  - YOUR IDEAS THAT YOU HAVE DEVELOPED through THoughtful Engagement w/ Sources.

- In **poor research writing**:
  
  - SOURCES DOMINATE and
  
  - THE WRITER’S PERSPECTIVE DISAPPEARS.
STEPS IN THE PROCESS

PREWRITING

WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

REVISING

PREPARING THE FINAL PAPER
Prewriting

FINDING A RESEARCH TOPIC

1. Select an interesting subject.
2. Think about your subject.
3. Limit your subject.
4. Write a thesis statement.
1. Select an interesting subject.

- Ask yourself, “What do you need or want to know?”
- Meaningful research starts with a personal need or desire to know.
- Consider controversial or intriguing topics or things important in your life.
  - What might you encounter with skeptics when you are a corps officer or with family & friends?
  - What is important for you to have a deeper understanding of the SA Doctrines?
Selecting a general subject – Doctrines 1 & 2

- What does it mean that the “Bible was given by inspiration of God”?
- Why does it mean to say that the “Bible has authority”?
- Why do we believe the OT and NT are the only divine rule of Christian faith practice?
- What does it mean for “God to be infinitely perfect”?
- What does it mean for “God to be Creator”?
- What does it mean for “God to be Governor & Preserver of all things”?
- What does it mean that “God is the only proper object of religious worship”? 
2. Think about your subject.

- Once you have selected a *general subject*, you need to **explore it further**.
- Start by writing down everything you know or don’t know about your subject.
  - I already know...
  - I want to find out **WHO**...
  - I want to discover **WHAT**...
  - I want to learn **WHEN**...
  - I want to know **WHERE**...
  - I want to understand **WHY**...
  - I want to find out **HOW**...
What does it mean that “God is the only proper object of religious worship”?

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  - I want to know **WHERE**...
  - I want to understand **WHY**...
  - I want to find out **HOW**...
Megan’s Example

- I already know God is over all and created everything.
  - I want to find out WHO...
- I want to discover WHAT this means for Salvationists.
  - I want to learn WHEN...
- I want to know WHERE the Bible talks about God being the “Preserver.”
- I want to understand WHY the word “Preserver” is important to include in the Doctrine 2 about God.
- I want to find out HOW God being the Preserver affects Christians’ lives.
Matt’s Example

- I already know who is God by being the only in the universe worthy of worship.
  - I want to find out WHO...
- I want to discover WHAT worship is based upon (or what is worship). We worship God because He is the only proper object of religious worship.
  - I want to learn WHEN...
  - I want to know WHERE...
- I want to understand WHY we (Christians) believe God is only object of religious worship.
- I want to find out HOW we have “true” religious worship (which is by believing in God to be the only one.)
Vivian’s Example

- I chose the **general subject:**
  What does it mean that the “Bible was given by inspiration of God?”
Vivian’s Example – cont’d:

- I already know that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and has ultimate authority in the Christians’ lives (and should have ultimately authority in everyone’s lives who encounter God.)
- But I want to find out **WHO** decided what goes in the Old and New Testament.
- I want to discover **WHAT** process went into deciding what is in the OT and NT was we know it today.
- I want to discover **WHEN** this was all decided by the Church and Church fathers.
- I want to know **WHERE** these decisions all took place.
- I want to understand **WHY** Protestant Christians have a different Bible from the Roman Catholics.
- I want to find out **HOW** to explain to skeptics that we can trust that the Bible as we know it today can be trusted to be truly inspired by God.
3. Limit your subject.

- After you’ve done the preliminary thinking, you need to take steps to find a limited topic.

- You need to zero in on a specific, limited topic – one that you can adequately cover in a 3-4 page research paper.
Tip to help you limit your subject...

- *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrines*

- Under each sub-heading, see what each “topic” specifically covers.
Example:

- **GENERAL SUBJECT:** What does it mean for “God to be infinitely perfect”?

- **SPECIFIC LIMITED TOPIC:**
  - See pages 26 – 28 in Handbook of Doctrines:
    - “Perfect in HOLINESS”
    - “Perfect in WISDOM”
    - “Perfect in POWER”
    - “Perfect in LOVE”
Matt’s Process of Choosing Thesis Statement

**General Subject:** What does it mean that “God is only proper object of religious worship”?

**Narrow your subject:** How Christians should response to God in worship.

**Select a working thesis:** In worship, Christians respond to what God does. The seeking God evokes our response in prayer.

**Put your thesis in a question:** How should Christians respond to God being a seeking God?

**Final Thesis Statement:** Christians’ proper response of worship is in the attitude of prayer when we remember God as a seeking God.

*When Christians remember God as a God who seeks us, our proper response is to approach God in prayer.*
Megan’s Thesis Statement

General Subject: What does it mean that God is Preserver?

Narrow your subject:

Select a working thesis:

Put your thesis in a question:

Final Thesis Statement: God being Preserver is demonstrated in His maintenance and care of creation. Therefore, Christians’ proper response to God being Preserver is proper care of His creation.
4. Write a Thesis Statement

• Good **Thesis Statement** tells the reader what the *topic is* and reveals *how you plan to treat your topic*.
• Serves as a **personal guide** to help you focus on your topic, and helps you prioritize your research time.

• A SINGLE SENTENCE that contains two elements:
  1) A **limited topic**
  2) A **specific feeling or attitude toward the topic**.
Thesis Statement:

A manageable or limited subject + a specific stand, feeling, or feature = an effective thesis statement
Example of a Thesis Statement

A manageable or limited subject (Multicultural education) + a specific stand, feeling, or feature (is vital to a society made up of many different peoples)

= an effective thesis statement

"Multicultural education is vital to a society made up of many different peoples."
The process at work - General Example

- A general subject: Global problems
- Narrow your subject: Social needs due to poverty
- Select a working thesis: Individuals who are tackling social needs
- Put your thesis in the form of a question: “How are individuals tackling the problem of social needs?”

** Compose a final thesis statement:
“Individuals are applying business strategies to tackle the social needs of the poor.”
The process at work
- Vivian’s Example

- A general subject: The inspired Word of God
- Narrow your subject: OT and NT is the inspired Word of God
- Select a working thesis: OT and NT were selected as the inspired Word of God
- Put your thesis in the form of a question: “How was the OT and NT selected as the inspired Word of God?”

** Compose a final thesis statement:
“The OT and NT were carefully selected as the inspired Word of God in what we know as the Canon.”
Checklist

- My thesis statement focuses on a single, limited subject.
- My thesis is stated in a clear, direct sentence (or sentences.)
- The thesis conveys my point of view or attitude about the topic.
- I have access to enough good information to support my thesis statement.
- The thesis predicts a research paper that meets all the requirements of the assignment.
PART TWO
Prewriting – cont’d

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

5. Prepare a preliminary bibliography.

6. Read and take notes.

7. Collect information from primary sources.
Prewriting – cont’d

DESIGNING A WRITING PLAN

8. Write your working outline.

9. Continue developing your research.

10. Revise your outline.
Writing the First Draft

11. Write the introduction.

12. Write the body.

*Write freely and openly.*

13. Write the conclusion.
TIPS for Research Writing

- Use your own words as much as possible.
- Present your own ideas honestly and clearly.
- Avoid fragments, abbreviations, or slang.
- Drop statements that you cannot support with facts.
Revising

14. Revise your first draft at least twice.

15. Document your sources.
Preparing the Final Paper

16. Edit your final revision.

17. Prepare your final copy.

18. Add identifying information.

19. Type your final outline (if required).

20. Check your paper from start to finish.
PART THREE: Writing Responsibly
1) Once you have collected the information, you need to **MAKE IT A PART OF YOUR OWN THINKING**.

2) **EXAMINE THE POINTS** on which your sources agree and disagree and decide **WHICH ONES OFFER THE BEST ARGUMENTS**.

3) Then determine how these **FINDINGS STAND UP TO YOUR OWN THINKING**.
Research becomes your own when you...

- Have a **genuine interest** in your topic,
- Give yourself **enough time** to learn about it,
- Involve yourself in active, **thorough research**, and
- Make your **own voice** the primary voice in your writing.
What’s Ahead

Avoiding Plagiarism
Writing Paraphrases
Using Quoted Material
Why Cite Your Sources?

- It’s the legal and smart thing to do.
  - You owe it to your sources, your reader, and yourself to give credit for other people’s words and ideas used in your writing.
  - Citing sources also adds authority to your writing.
Plagiarism - Definition

- Using sources without giving credit, or

- The act of presenting someone else's ideas as your own.
FORMS of Plagiarism

- Submitting another writer’s paper: The most blatant!
- Using copy-and-paste: Even if you change a few words, it is still plagiarism.
- Neglecting necessary quotation marks: You must put the exact words of the source in the “quotation marks” and cite them.
- Paraphrasing without citing a source: Paraphrased ideas must still be credited to the source.
- Confusing borrowed material with your own ideas: While taking research notes, identify the source of each idea you record.
Other Source ABUSES

• Using sources inaccurately. Don’t twist someone else’s words to support your own ideas.

• Overusing source material. Your paper should be primarily your thoughts and words, not simply stringing together paraphrases and quotations.

• “Plunking” source material. Don’t drop in quotations or paraphrases with no introduction or comment.

• Relying too heavily on one source. If your writing is dominated by one source, your reader may doubt the depth and integrity of your research.
Examples of Plagiarism
– see copy of p. 329

• Using copy-and-paste *without* quotation marks and citation.
• Using key words *without* quotation marks and citation.
• Paraphrasing *without* citation.
• Using an author’s idea *without* citation.
1. Skim the selection first to get the overall meaning.
2. Then read the selection carefully, paying attention to key words and phrases.
3. Next, try listing the main ideas on a piece of paper (without looking at the selection).
4. Review the selection again – so you have the overall meaning clearly in mind as you write.
5. Write your paraphrase.
   • Stick to essential info.
   • State each possible idea as clearly and concisely as possible.
   • Put quotation marks around key words or phrases taken directly from the source.
   • Arrange the ideas into a smooth logical order.
Examples of Paraphrases

- See p. 331
Using Quoted Material Quick Guide

- See p. 332