Choosing the Topic
There are essentially two major types of topic one can choose: Expository and Factual or Interpretive.
A. Expository and Factual
1. Explains or describes something. This can be an event, a person, an inanimate object, a book, a movie, etc., or any combination of these 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.
      i. There is no room in an expository/factual paper for opinion
      ii. E.g., a sentence such as “William Shakespeare’s play Hamlet is the best play ever written in English” would be wrong. However, “Many scholars have stated that William Shakespeare’s Hamlet is the best play ever written in English” would be permissible if you can document this.
B. Interpretive - Embodies feelings or interpretations.
   Herein, the sentence “William Shakespeare’s play Hamlet is the best play ever written in the English language” would be acceptable. You must, however, then “prove” the statement. But the “proof” need not rely on the word of scholars, or experts. It can be based on your own feelings about the piece.

Picking a Subject
A. A topic should interest you and be manageable in terms of resources available. Resources include both the materials you can find about the topic and the time available to use these to produce the paper.
B. The topic must be limited 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 simpler 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 facts/opinions you present in the paper. Of much greater importance is whether you have sufficiently covered the topic you chose.
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 in life to take a stand when time (and your grade) isn’t as important.
D. Be prepared to change your topic as you proceed with your research. As you research a subject, you may find that your original topic presents a problem.
   1. There may not be enough material available on the subject.
   2. There may be too much material on the subject for you to do justice in the time available.
   3. In an interpretive/opinion paper, the material you uncover may cause you to change your interpretation or opinion.
E. Start early; do not procrastinate. The longer you wait before beginning 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.
   Note: The following is a checklist of the items required in most papers. Later in the chart we will discuss each in detail.
   1. Footnotes
   2. Bibliography
   3. Length of paper
   4. Approach

5. Table of contents
6. Title page
7. Index

Single space or double space

Approach
A. Descriptive approach - Write about a thing, a person, or an event, such as: “The Recent Drought in Kansas.” You would detail the drought, its effects on farmers, crops, economics, etc.
B. Explanatory approach - Explain why or how something happened such as: “Why the Mississippi River Flooded in 1993.” You would marshal facts, scientific opinion, and statistics about weather and other causes.
C. Argumentative approach - Example: “AIDS Education Should be Mandatory in High School.”
   1. Here 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 Secondary.
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 event.
   2. Conduct experiments to prove/disprove your thesis.
   3. In rare instances, the writer may be his/her own primary source. For example, a passenger on the Titanic writes about the experience.

Note: It is only in very rare circumstances that a teacher will allow a research paper to be based on one’s own experience. (Usually, as in (a.) where the experience is one of such significance as to have greater import for others.)
B. Secondary 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 subject, listening to recordings of speeches/events, etc.
   3. The most readily available source of all this information is the library, although more and more frequently students are also using the Internet.

Search Strategy
A. Object
   1. Survey the literature and other source materials on the topic. These can include both materials in print and such other sources as CD-Roms, Internet sources, videos, and, on occasion, personal interviews.
   2. Gain information about your topic.
   3. Compile a working bibliography.
B. Sources
   Note: Listed in the next column are the steps for finding print information in the library. In most cases, research via non-print sources can be conducted in similar fashion through most libraries. Check with your librarian.

1. General reference works such as encyclopedias, yearbooks, almanacs.
   a. Encyclopedia articles give an overview and refer to books and journal articles.
   b. Read pertinent articles in several encyclopedias.
   c. Take note of the citations of books and magazine articles on the topic. Make a list of those citations that will be useful.
   2. Specialized reference works are found by using guides such as Eugene P. Sheehy’s Guide to Reference Books.
      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 Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature, the Social Science Index, the Humanities Index and others, depending on the nature of your topic, are good sources of bibliography.
C. Working Bibliography
   1. On 3 x 5 index cards or by computer, record the author and title of each book you want to examine.
   2. Arrange cards alphabetically by author and look up call numbers in card catalog or on-line catalog. Call numbers tell where to find books in library.

Taking Notes
A. Process
   1. Breathe as you locate and read books and articles.
   2. Expand 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.
      a. For articles, record full name of magazine being consulted, its volume number or “whole” number, month and issue number, inclusive page numbers of article, and author of article.
      b. Recording full information now will save time later.
B. Accuracy is Essential
   1. Constantly follow one form of note-taking.
   2. Each note consists of one item of information.
   3. Write the notes in your own words. If you quote or copy a passage, do it accurately and enclose it within quotation marks.
C. System of reference works
   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. You may abbreviate the notes/index and others, depending on the nature of your topic, are good sources of bibliography.
   2. Notes can also be made in loose-leaf notebooks.
      a. Use only one side of paper that separate notes can be cut out and put into logical order when writing the term paper.
   3. Computers facilitate note-taking and preparing the written paper.
      a. Different programs have different features.
      b. Always record the source of each note and always use citation marks to indicate what you have copied.

Documentation
A. Identifies your sources of information.
B. Most difficult technical aspect of term papers.
C. There are different styles of documentation.
   1. One style is traditionally used for papers in the humanities.
2. Another is used in the sciences, increasingly in the social sciences, and even now, in the humanities.
3. Always follow the style approved by your teacher.
   a. This does not, as is often assumed, dictate a specific style.
   b. It lists numerous accepted writing styles and gives a comprehensive breakdown of the elements each must contain.
   a. This is not to say that it is necessarily a better style than any others.
   b. Teachers pick a specific style for consistency.
   c. Any format that gives complete and accurate documentation is, in and of itself, acceptable, but only the style your teacher assigns will be acceptable on your paper.

### Originality

A. Avoid plagiarism (using someone else’s words and claiming them as your own). Not only is this illegal, it is pointless.
1. If you can write as well as the source you are plagiarizing, the plagiarism is pointless.
2. If you cannot, it will be obvious to the teacher that you are using the work of others.
B. Every quotation and all borrowed materials, even if paraphrased, must be documented.

### What is Plagiarism and what is Research? There is an old joke: Stealing from one source is plagiarism. Stealing from many sources is research. Yet this may be closer to the truth than we think. Obviously, transcribing someone else’s words is plagiarism, but what about ideas? At what point does an idea become a product of research and not just a paraphrase of a specific person’s idea that must be documented? The fact is, there are no hard and fast rules, and any time you question whether to credit a source or not, it’s probably best not to. That having been said, some good “rules of thumb” are:
A. If you come across the same fact in two or more sources, it can probably go into your paper uncredited, for all practical purposes they can be separated into two major categories: The “traditional” and the Modern Language Association (MLA) style.
B. If, however, you come across a fact that may be less well-known, is only contained in one source, seems to be contrary to popular opinion, or, in some cases, simply makes you say “Hey, I didn’t know that!” (e.g. Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation did not free all slaves, merely those in states fighting for the confederacy.), document.

**MLA or “Traditional” Documentation?** Although there are numerous forms of documenting the sources you may cite, for all practical purposes they can be separated into two major categories: The “traditional” and the Modern Language Association (MLA) style.

A. Traditional method uses Endnotes and Footnotes (see: Right) to document sources.
   1. This allows for uninterrupted writing/reading of your paper (and your thoughts), as you can simply write your material and later go back and footnote, which will aid in both the writing and reading process.
   2. *But* it does, as often, interrupt the flow as readers are sent away from the main text to either the bottom of the page or the back of the text.
B. MLA method places documentation immediately following the line/thought being documented in parentheses.
   1. This allows the reader and the writer to read/write text continuously.
   2. It also allows the reader to determine whether there is any need to interrupt reading for “other” material (See: Special Circumstances).
C. The MLA style is being the style of choice for most schools.
D. Special Circumstances - In addition to documenting sources, many writers (though few writing school papers) use footnotes to add extra material that, while it may be outside of the scope of the point the writer is making in the paper, is of interest or may deepen the point of the reference. In such a circumstance, it is not uncommon for writers, even those using MLA documentation style, to footnote/endnote.

**E.g. (Note: Items in bold are our explanatory notations) Isaac Asimov thinks the title characters in *Romeo and Juliet* children, (Asimov 182) refers to page 182 in a book by Asimov listed in “Works Cited,” and I agree. This is the point you want to make. You can then go on to reinforce the point, use the point for further discussion of “themes” in *Romeo and Juliet*, etc., or go on to another point. You might, however, wish to also note Asimov was notorious for stating viewpoints outside the mainstream, often to “get a rise” out of his readers. Since this is outside of your point and/or the thrust of the paper, you may footnote/endnote it instead of putting it in the body of the text.
E. It cannot be stated often enough that the documentation, or other style assigned to you by your teacher, is not to be waived away in any other accepted style. It is for conformity and ease of reading in a situation wherein your teacher has numerous papers to view and needs to assure that they all meet certain criteria. Therefore, no matter which style may be more convenient for you, always follow your teacher’s assignment.

### Traditional Footnotes/Endnotes

**Footnotes** are placed at the bottom of the page on which the reference is made.
1. Single-space the lines of a footnote.
2. Double-space between the footnote and the same page.

**Endnotes** are placed on a separate page at the end of the paper. Double-space all endnotes.

C. The **points** in your text that you document are marked by superscript (placed slightly above the word line) numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. These correspond to the foot-

**Endnote numbers.**

D. The **First Reference** to a source should provide full bibliographic information:
   - E.g. Calvin Pinchin *author*, *Issues in Philosophy* (title **always underlined or italicized**), [London; Macmillan Education, 1990] [Place of publication, publisher, year of publication] [page number cited].
   - *Subsequent references may be abbreviated.* E.g. Pinchin [author] 152 [page number].
E. Documenting journal articles: *Scientific American* [name of publication that contained article-in italics or underlined] 270 [volume number] [June 1994] [Date of publication]: 22 [number page cited—comes after colon].
F. As above, subsequent references can be abbreviated (Hardy, *Adaptive Optics*), 63.

### Author – Date System

**Areas of use:**
1. Sciences; favored in the Social Sciences.
2. Popular in the Humanities.

**Logistics:**
1. To refer to a source, use the last name of the author and the date of publication of book or article within parentheses (McAleer 1984). If you are referring to a particular page, use (McAleer 1984, 63).

**End of the paper,** on a separate page headed Reference List, the full citations appears: McAleer, John [Author, Last name first, followed by a period] 1984 [Year of publication followed by a period] Ralph Waldo Emerson: Days of Encounter [Full title of the work, followed by a period] Boston: Little, Brown and Company [Place of publication (colon) and Name of Publisher].

If more than one author cited is, it is listed in order of the date of publication.

### The MLA Style

**Reference**
1. Last name of the author and appropriate page number.
   - *McAleer 613 (Commas are not required in internal documentation).*
   - Subsequent references to the same article/book need only cite page number without author name (McAleer 613, 614).
   - If none of these references followed, no interconnecting author citation.
2. Full citations appear at the end of the paper on a page headed Works Cited.
   - This contains the same, full, bibliographic informa-
   - tion as the Reference List in other styles of papers.
   - This is *not* to be confused with a Bibliography, which may also be required.

### Use of Library

**Library**

1. Best source of information for most term papers.
2. Most libraries today have access to more than books and periodicals.
3. Video audios, tapes, increasingly, CD-ROM materials are also available.
4. Many libraries now make Internet search time and materials available.
5. Understanding how to use the library is essential for successfully finding what you need, quickly and efficiently.
6. Many libraries offer bibliographic instruction to aid in your search. Ask the librarian to assist you.

### Card Catalogs

1. Originally these were drawn containing 3x5 index cards that held the information on where to find the materials you need. Increasingly, however, they take the form of a computerized database. In either form, their format remains essentially the same.
2. Contain separate breakdowns of materials under *author, title, and subject heading*. Learn to distinguish them.
3. Each card holds same information but in different order.
   - *Author* cards have author’s name on the top line.
   - *Subject* cards have subject on the top line.
   - *Subject-heading* cards have subjects on the top line.
   - Refers to books on same subject.
   - Learn the pertinent subject headings for your topic and use them to build your bibliography.
   - Librarians can direct you to guides to subject headings.
   - Many subjects are sub-divided (e.g. “Kansas-History-Chronology”).
   - Subject headings can lead you to bibliographies (e.g. “Agriculture-Kansas-Bibliography”).
   - Subject headings and their bibliographies are never arbitrary. Your research will be facilitated by learning how they are formulated.

4. An important tool for gathering a bibliography for the advanced term paper is the Library of Congress *Catalog of Subject Headings*.

5. Databases in catalog format also allow for additional paths to materials such as “Keyword.”
   - A keyword is a distinctive word in a book’s title, subtitle, or descriptive entry.
   - You can often narrow and specify a search by focusing on more than one keyword at a time.
   - If searching for material on airplane crashes, key words: “Airplane” or “Crash” separately would produce one list of every title on every airplane and a second list on every crash of any kind, including stock market “crashes.”
   - Combining the two into one search will narrow the field considerably.

### Classification

1. Learn the classification system of your library, and you can browse the collection. Browsing can be done in the actual library stacks (shelves) or by computer.
2. Call number
   - Books on similar topics are classed together.
3. Catalog of Congress (LOC) system
   - 20 major classes, each beginning with a capital letter. E.g. books on education begin with L and then break down into divisions.
4. Dewey Decimal system
   - 10 major classes, beginning with a 3 digit number. E.g. all technology books begin with 600 and then break down into subdivisions.

### Reference Works

**General**

- Dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, and guides to particular topics. Usually provide best overview of a topic but can be severely limited in “in-depth” analysis.

**Specialized**

1. Can be found either in book form or CD-ROM.
2. Reference librarian can direct you.
Critical Thinking
Compose an effective research project
A. Argumentation with practical logic strengthens paper
B. Assert and defend argument

Assumptions
A. Belief that a writer takes for granted:
   Ex. Writers are born not made.
B. 1. Assumes ability to write well is an inborn trait and cannot be taught
2. Obvious lack of development
B. Can refer to a general attitude or belief system that underlies an argument:
Ex. Women should not take jobs outside the home.
1. writer ignores fact that many women are single parents and cannot afford to stay at home and not earn money
2. Assumes women can’t work effectively outside home

Deduction/Induction
A. Refers to how writer structures an argument and uses evidence
B. Deductive style
1. Moves from general statements to specific information
2. Thesis is general; evidence is specific and narrow
C. Inductive argument
1. Moves from specific statements to general conclusions
2. Evidence appears first and leads reader to a reasoned thesis or conclusion

Logical Fallacies
A. Mistakes in how writer has set up an argument or some support of the argument
B. Non-sequitur - Statement that does not follow logically from the stated premises:
Ex. Edward was over six feet tall, so he always wore blue on Sunday.
C. Stereotypes - Positive and negative should be avoided
Ex. Being a woman meant she was smaller than a man. Being a woman meant she was more compassionate than a man.
D. Circular Argument - Assertion that is repeated and “begs the question”:
Ex. Most people like gardening because it is something they enjoy.
E. Bandwagon appeals - Uses the desire to “go along with the crowd” as fact:
Ex. Surveys show that a majority of the people want only “family oriented” programming on television.
Therefore, this must be our goal.
F. Ad hominem [a.k.a appeals to the person] - Attacks a person’s character or habits instead of dealing with the real issue:
Ex. Mr. Wilson has admitted to a tendency to overeat. Therefore, we cannot trust him with foreign policy.
G. Card-stacking - Ignores an issue’s contrary evidence:
Ex. A “pro-gun” paper that cites only people who have used guns to protect themselves from danger, or an “anti-gun” paper that cites only accidental deaths caused by guns.
H. Either-or - Offers only two alternatives when more exist:
Ex. Either young people plan to get married and raise a family, or they resist themselves to a lonely adulthood.

Formatting the Final Copy

Endnotes / References / Citations / Bibliographies

Noting things for the student than the differences between the above. This confusion is not lessened when you consider that any of them can be part of any of the others. Bearing that in mind we will try to explain the differences and the similarities. As with other sections, where “traditional standards” (T) differ from MLA standards (M), we will so note.

Endnotes
Are just that, notes about the text that do not appear in either the body of the text or as footnotes. Where they differ from reference lists, works cited, or bibliography material (see Contents to “rarely” lengthy introductions, acknowledgements, prefaces, etc. use Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.).

Bibliography
As noted previously, there are numerous styles required in numerous disciplines. This is not done to confuse you. It reflects the information needed within that particular discipline (e.g. less emphasis on the date of writing if a work of literary interest may be more significant, say, in a guide to computer science wherein a 1995 work may be less reliable than one printed in 1997). It would be impossible to cover each and every style in a work of this sort. Moreover, it is unnecessary in a work geared to the general student. The following therefore contains, in each area, only the two major forms:

1. The generally accepted standards that we call “traditional” and the ever growing accepted standard of the MLA. Where these differ, the MLA standard is preceded by (M).

Reference Source
A. List, alphabetically by author, of all sources used in preparing and writing the paper
B. Every book, journal article, etc., cited in your Notes must be included in the bibliography.
C. Placed at the end of the paper, just before the Index (if required).
D. Items in the bibliography are given full bibliographic description.
   1. Books: Author (Last name, first). Title. Place of publication: publisher, Date of publication.
   2. Articles: Author (Last name first). “Title of Article.” Title of Publication. Issue number. Date of Publication. Pages on which article appears. a. Give all pages of article (e.g. 60-65, 69, 103). b. Articles are often continued in later pages of a journal/periodical.

Bibliographic Formats / A Selection

A. In all formats major title is always italicized or, if you cannot italicize, (using a typewriter, handwritten notes, etc.) underlined.

B. Examples:

   - Notes in bold are our emphasis. They do not appear in bold on your list(s).
   - Two or more books by the same author:
     1st Entry: Author (Last name first). Title. Place of publication: Publisher, Date of publication.
     2nd Entry: (Omit repeating author name). Title. Place of publication: Publisher, Date of publication. And so on for all subsequent entries under same author.
   - Book with two or three authors:
     Author (Last name first) and 2nd Author (First name first). Title. etc.
     Author (Last name first), (comma) 2nd Author (First name first) and 3rd Author (First name first). Book with more than three authors:
     1st Author (Last name first), (comma) et al. Title. etc. “et all” means “and others.”