

# 11th Grade Research Project

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

## What is a research project?

Research is the collecting of information about a specific subject. When you research, you are trying to find the answer (or answers) to a question on a topic of interest to you. Your project will use the information you have discovered to develop or suggest a viewpoint and support it with evidence.

There are two types of research papers. Informational research papers summarize and present factual information in a coherent and organized way. Analytical papers present factual information and draw conclusions from the evidence presented. You will be writing an **analytical research paper**. Often an analytical paper will explore a question. The analytical paper that explores a question has some elements of persuasive writing in that the writer's conclusion is an opinion derived from the factual evidence.

Analysis in research papers involves breaking down a topic into its parts so you can understand it. You do research to become an expert on the topic so you can present it from your own perspective. For example, you could analyze or evaluate the culture of protest movements during the 1960's and 1970's.

However, if your research paper is exploring a question, it needs to support one side or the other for you to be able to draw a conclusion. For example, you could find research to back up your point that protest movements during the 1960's and 1970's were instrumental in bringing an end to our involvement in the Vietnam War. This is a very different focus than evaluating the protest movement culture during the 1960's. As you explore a question you will **use evidence to support a perspective on a topic**.

## The Research Process

*For students who would like to follow an online guide through the research process, there is a wonderful resource at:*

<http://www.crlsresearchguide.org>

**WEEKS 1-2**

**Choose and Narrow a Topic from American History**

Think of a topic from American History that you want to investigate. Do not pick a topic that is too general. A specific topic is easier to research and write about. It is also more interesting to read about in a report. The topic must deal with U.S. history in some form – social, political, economic, religious, military, diplomatic, etc.

The topic must do one of the following:

- ▶ explore a thought provoking and controversial question
- ▶ compare two events or people in history
- ▶ evaluate an event or person

Topics that are unacceptable:

- Ø Conspiracy theories – Who shot JFK?
- Ø Straight biography – You may choose a topic dealing with one person but not in biography format. Ask a question like “Did William Lloyd Garrison help or hurt the abolition movement?” You will spend very little of the paper discussing his early life. See the list of “Possible Research Topics” for ideas.

Example:

“The Vietnam War” is a very large topic. Narrowing the topic to “Protests against the Vietnam War” is better but it is still too large as there were so many. Plus, what’s your point? Narrow your topic even further to a specific event, such as “the role of students in the Vietnam War protests” and now ask yourself what you want to learn about that. Perhaps you arrive at “how college students succeeded in influencing the outcome of Vietnam War” a specific and interesting topic to research.

Topics that interest me (teacher will help student narrow the topic if necessary and approve the topic selected for research with his/her initials):

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## **Discover What Is Known and What Needs to Be Learned**

Get to know your topic. Are there recent articles or reports in the news that relate to your topic? Who and what are authoritative sources on your topic?

## **Formulate Research Questions**

What do you know about your topic? What do you want to learn? Write down some questions about your topic that you want to find the answers to. Look at the most important words in your questions (in bold below), known as key words. These words will be the focus of your research.

Sample research questions:

Is there **life** on **Mars**?

Is **water** or **oxygen** found on Mars?

Can **life forms** live on the **surface** of Mars?

What have **space missions** to Mars discovered about **possible life** there?

## **Choose Appropriate Resources to Support Your Topic**

Resources can be people you interview, such as experts or teachers.

Textbooks, magazines, newspapers, videos, photographs, encyclopedias, single subject books and the internet are all resources as well. See the specific resource requirements for 9th grade on you "Information Sheet."

## **Gather Information**

You may need to survey, skim or scan a variety of sources in order to pick the best ones. There is no sense reading an entire book or article if they do not address your research questions.

## **Take Notes**

As you read your research materials, take notes on notecards or notebook paper (these will be handed in).

For each source:

1. Include the key words or important phrases about your topic.
2. Use the "Sources Consulted Chart" to record each source you consult. Do not forget to do this!
3. Write down information that is important to your topic. Write down the information in your own words, or, if you copy the exact words from a source, be sure to put the words in quotation marks and note the page number(s). If you copy someone else's words without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism is illegal. It will result in failing the research project and will be reported to the director.

## WEEKS 2-3

### Analyze and Evaluate Information from Multiple Sources

After you have taken notes from all the sources you plan to use, you will need to analyze that information. You will be looking to see if there is some repeated information and how the information from different sources relates to each other. Evaluate the information to see if it is relevant and useful before deciding to include it in your paper.

### Make an Outline

An outline will help you synthesize and organize information from multiple sources, as well as summarize your research findings and draw conclusions. To make an outline:

1. Put all your notes that have the same keywords or phrases together.
2. Make the first research question from your notes into a main idea statement. This will be Roman numeral I. Each of your key research questions which yielded useful and relevant information will be a Roman numeral heading.
3. Find the details that explain each main idea and list them below the main idea statement with capital letters (A, B, C, etc.)
4. More specific details (such as quotations) can be listed with numbers and lower case letters under each capital letter detail.
5. Give your outline a title.
6. Also, visit this web address to use an amazing online outline maker!  
<http://www.crlsresearchguide.org/NewOutlineMaker/NewOutlineMakerInput.aspx>

### Write a Thesis Statement

There should be one complete sentence that expresses the main idea of your research paper. That sentence is often called the thesis, or thesis statement. (Some other names it goes by are "the main idea" and "the controlling idea.") Based on everything you've read, and thought, and brainstormed, the thesis is not just your topic, but ***what you're saying about your topic***. Another way to look at it is, once you've come up with the central question, or organizing question, of your essay, ***the thesis is an answer to that question***.

Remember, though, while you are still writing your paper, consider what you have to be a "working thesis," or one that may still be adjusted to fit with your findings.

Write your thesis here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### Write Title and Introduction

Copy the title of your outline. You can always change it if you come up with something more interesting later. Just make sure it gives the main idea of your topic. Now write an interesting introduction that will grab your reader's attention and explain what the report will be about. You may wish to start

with a startling fact or statistic you have learned through your research or with a perplexing question or scenario. Include your thesis in your introduction, often as the final sentence.

### **Write the Body**

The body is the main portion of your report. Use your main ideas to write topic sentences for each paragraph. Then use your research details to explain and support each topic. It is important to add **quotations** and **citations** from your research to lend your voice authority. You will try to integrate these smoothly into your writing. Any words that are not your own must be in quotation marks. If you paraphrase an idea or information that is not your own (put it in your own words), you still must cite its source. To cite a source means to list the information of your source. For this research project, you will use the citation style developed by the Modern Language Association (MLA). The MLA style way to cite is to list the author and page number of your source in parentheses right after you use the words or ideas of that author.

#### **Example:**

There are two main ingredients for all life: oxygen and water (Richards 68). Numerous robots and spacecraft have been sent to Mars to look for clues. Most recently, “NASA’s Mars Phoenix lander has arrived at Mars, with a digging arm that will let it scoop up the icy soil near the Martian north pole. They’re hoping to find evidence of organic molecules in the ice, and further clinch the possibility that the raw ingredients for life are on Mars” (Cain 1). The findings from this expedition will have a significant impact on what we know about life on Mars.

At the end of your report, you will create a separate “Works Cited” page.

### **Write the Conclusion**

Write about the main ideas of your report in your conclusion. Also, restate your thesis. This will summarize your report. You can also include an interesting fact or opinion to end your report that will keep your audience thinking after they have finished reading.

## **WEEK 4**

### **Revise Your Research Paper**

The word revise means “to see again.” After a day or two, pick up your draft of your research paper and read it with fresh eyes. Look for both strengths and weaknesses. Mark your paper where you can improve the content, clarity and style of your paper. Then pass your paper on to another reader and ask him/her to do the same. Use the check list that follows.

#### **Focus and Unity**

- The thesis (main idea statement) is clearly stated and fits the paper.
- The thesis is supported by relevant details.
- Ideas and details flow together logically and smoothly.

#### **Organization**

- The title tells what the report is about.
- The introductory paragraph is interesting and gets the attention of the reader.
- The body of the paper gives facts/ideas discovered through research.
- Each body paragraph covers one topic (from the outline).
- There are effective transitions between ideas.
- The ideas are presented in the best order.
- The conclusion, or ending, is insightful and fitting.

#### **Development of Ideas**

- The ideas are meaningful.
- The details are clearly and accurately explained.
- The details answer your original research questions.
- There are many facts and ideas from other sources and those sources are indicated in parentheses.
- The conclusion is a summary of the most important information on the topic.

#### **Voice and Style**

- The writing is unique and engaging.
- Most of the sentences are in the active rather than passive voice. (i.e., *Luis solved the problem* rather than *The problem was solved by Luis*.)
- The writer sounds like an expert on the topic.

Revise your paper accordingly. Try to take your writing from good to great.

### **Edit Your Research Paper**

Edit your writing for mistakes in grammar, usage, mechanics and spelling. Consult the grammar handbook at the back of your English textbook if you need to revisit rules for grammar, punctuation, commonly confused words, etc. Errors in written conventions will detract from your overall project, so edit

carefully and/or get a trusted friend or family member to help you. Use the “Typing Tips and Requirements” handout at this point.

### **Create the Works Cited Page (or Bibliography)**

Your list of works cited must contain every print and internet source that you reference, either directly or in your own words. You should follow the MLA citation format precisely. Your teacher has a 7-page resource which you can use. The resource is also available online at:

<http://www.cpsd.us/crls/library/PDFs/WorksCitedHowTo.pdf> You should also consult the “Typing Tips and Requirements” handout again.

### **Congratulations!**

Before handing in your research project, go through each item in the “Final Check List” and REALLY check to see that you have required information, writing and format. Then, hand it in a smile with relief. You don’t have to do a research project again...until next year!