Format for Research Paper

1) Define a motive or purpose for writing
Teachers and professors read papers because they have to. But a good paper should be interesting to a broader audience when you express your motive; you indicate why you are writing your paper. The motive is not the argument itself but rather the reason that your argument should be interesting to your reader. Motives may take into account what other critics have written, common perceptions of an event, or historical context.

2) Planning your paper
Once you know your argument, thesis, and motive, you may want to go ahead and write your thesis paragraph. Otherwise you should begin to organize your evidence and observations. Group your evidence into categories, as this often leads to a strategy for organizing your paper. Common types of categories include: content-based and argument-based.

3) Outline
If you plan the steps of your argument before you write your essay, you’re less likely to get stuck or not know where to go next. An outline is like a map of your argument; it should show the sequence of your ideas and argument. The first part of your outline should include your motive and your thesis statement. You should write down the subcategories of your argument and note the evidence that you plan to use.

4) Writing the paper
Thesis paragraph-The first paragraph of the paper is the most important-and probably the most difficult to write, as it describes the focus of your argument and your reason for making it. If you know what your argument is before you write your first paragraph, you’ll feel like you have something to say and be less nervous about starting at a blank screen.

Background material and context-An exhaustive summary of the subject matter relating to your argument will be time-consuming for your and tiresome for your reader. Assume that your reader is well educated and can understand an argument about a book or event with which he or she is unfamiliar. Give only the most relevant background information in your first paragraph.

State your motive and thesis-Your introductory paragraph should tell your reader why your paper is relevant. Typically, you’ll want to make your thesis statement in the final sentences of the introductory paragraph.

Body Paragraphs-Use the body paragraphs of your paper to develop your argument. Some standardized assignments, such as AP tests, expect you to write three body paragraphs between your thesis paragraph and your conclusion. For most essays, however, you should use as many paragraphs as you need to express your ideas effectively. Each paragraph should develop a single, specific component of your argument. A paragraph should not explore two separate ideas unless it explicitly tells why they are related to each other.

Topic Sentences-Each paragraph should begin with a sentence that develops your thesis statement. Topic sentences should introduce new information that confirms or complicates the argument that you state in the first paragraph.

Evidence and analysis-Within the paragraph, you should use specific evidence to support the idea started in your topic sentence. Evidence may include historical events, passages from a fictional test, statistics, or arguments that other people have made about your topic. Analysis sentences explain why this evidence supports the argument that you are making.

Transitions within paragraphs-The ideas within each body paragraph should come in a logical sequence. This sequence can explain, complicate, or develop the idea of the topic sentence. Transitions between paragraphs-Just as the ideas within the paragraph should come in a logical sequence, so should the paragraphs themselves. Each paragraph should relate explicitly to the preceding and following paragraph. Phrases like “also important,” “in addition,” or “we should also note that” are weak because they fail to explain the relationships between ideas in consecutive paragraphs. Example: In a paper on Huckleberry Finn, you might need to transition from a paragraph about Pa’s attitude toward Jim to a paragraph about the townspeople’s attitude toward Jim. The transition “The townspeople’s prejudice against black people is also important” is weak because the relationship it shows between the two ideas is obvious. The transition “Whereas Pa’s racism is based in ignorance and stupidity, the townspeople’s racism is calculated and thought out” is stronger because it evaluates the link between the two ideas.

Concluding paragraph-A conclusion should explain the significance of your thesis statement in a larger contest. Although a conclusion should provide a sense of closure, it should not make broad generalizations that imply that you have supplied an absolute solution to the problem your paper addresses.

Techniques for concluding-One of the most effective ways to provide a sense of closure is to cite a relevant quotation from the text you are working with and to explain how to interpret that quotation using your argument. Another technique is to explain a term that you bring up in your thesis statement. Ending your paper by showing that your argument can be applied to a related topic reiterates the relevance of your ideas.
5) Citing it text
For every quotation or reference in the text of your paper, indicate the author and page number of the referenced work in a parenthetical note immediately following the reference. The final quotation mark comes before the first parenthesis, and the sentence’s punctuation comes after the final parenthesis. If you do not directly quote the author but still reference his or her ideas, these rules apply. For information on when you need to include a reference, see the section on plagiarism.

Works by one author: In parentheses, after the quote, include the author’s last name and the page number. If you name the author in the text of the paper, include the page number but not the author’s name. Example: It has been said that “all men may be created equal, but not all men live equally well” (Howard 421). Example: Finton Howard firmly insists that “all men may be created equal, but not all men live equally well” (421).

Works by two or three authors: Include each author’s name in the parenthesis, separated by “and.” Example: “A man who knows where the fish eat may soon eat fish himself” (Rogers and Llewellyn 15).

Works by more than three authors: Either list every author in the parenthetical note, in the same order in which they appear in the Works Cited section, or list only the first author followed by “et al.” Example: The platonic theory of forms had nothing to do with Plato and “probably would have been entirely unfamiliar to him during his life” (Cheng et al. 301).

Two or more works by the same author: Include a short version of the work’s title in the parenthetical note, separated from the author’s name with a comma. Example: In her theory of representation, on the other hand, she is less interested in notions of beauty than in notions of linguistic accuracy” (Martin, Language 143).

Poems and verse dramas: Cite act, scene, and line numbers, separated by periods. Do not cite page numbers. Do not use Roman numerals. When poems are not divided into acts or scenes, cite only line numbers. Example: (Shakespeare, Hamlet 1.23.218-219). Example: Keats 14-16) or (Keats lines 14-16). When poems are offset in block quotes (more than three lines), include the parenthetical citation to the right of the last line of the quote. If it doesn’t fit, include it on the next line, aligned with the right margin of the page.

6) Works Cited
The Works Cited section should follow the end of your paper. The purpose of this section is to make it possible for your readers to identify and consult the sources that you use to make your argument.

Basic rules-The Works Cited section must include every work you cite in your paper. Place the Works Cited section at the end of the paper, starting on a separate page. Single-space entries but leave an additional space between entries. Center the words “Work Cited” one inch below the top of the page. Place the first line of each entry flush with the left margin of the page. Indent each subsequent line of each entry 0.5 inches from the left margin. Alphabetize the entries by author’s last name. For works with no listed author, alphabetize by title.

Example:

Books with one, two, or three authors: Authors’ names, title (italicized), city of publication (include state abbreviations for smaller cities), publisher, and date.

Example:

Books with authors and editors or translators: Include the name of the editor or translator after the title, abbreviating “editor” to Ed.” and “translator” to “Trans.”

Example:

Two of more works by the same author: Sort alphabetically by title. For every entry after the first, replace the author’s name with three em-dashes.

Example:

Journal articles: Authors’ names, title of article (in quotes), journal title (italicized), date or volume and issue number and page numbers.

Example:

Websites: Complete URL and, if available, author information, title information, date text was posted, date site was accessed, and company or organization information.
Example:

Articles in an encyclopedia or reference book: Author’s name, title of the article, title of the work, and publication information (including number of volumes).
Examples:

7) A title page and abstract of 100-150 words.

Research Paper Length
A student should strive to complete their research presentation within TEN (10) minutes. Under no circumstances should the presentation exceed 12 minutes. Students exceeding the limit can expect their grades to be reduced.

Hand-out Length and Distribution
Your research presentation must be supplemented by a handout not to exceed THREE (3) typed pages of text in length (and only 250 words per page – strictly enforced). Your handout should also feature a bibliography section in which you list all sources consulted or cited.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the copying out verbatim of parts of a work without citation. If you wish to quote the works of others, please make sure you use quotation marks and footnotes indicating your source/sources. Where plagiarism is suspected, the student will be interviewed. If the case is established beyond the reasonable doubt the piece of work in question will be given a mark of ZERO.