Research Paper Manual

and

Usage Guide

1. <u>FINDING A TOPIC AND GENERATING SUBTOPICS</u>

Students are often assigned a subject or choose a subject which is a broad topic or general area of interest. The broad topic must then be narrowed to a more limited and focused topic. Sometimes the most difficult part of research is to come up with a topic that is interesting, has sufficient research material, and can be approached objectively.

For example, you are assigned to write about a contemporary American issue, and you want to write about MTV. While MTV is a subject, it is not a topic and needs to be narrowed further. Appropriate topics might include focusing on how MTV impacts adolescents or why MTV's programming is so controversial.

Ways to Generate Subtopics

Once you have found your topic, you are not yet ready to jump into research. You need to break that topic down into subtopics that will guide your work and become key words in your research. Consider asking questions at this point in the process.

Think of the 5 W's and an H:
- **Who** is the audience?
- **What** is MTV? (What does the cable television network show?)
- **When** did MTV become part of common awareness?
- **Where** in the country is MTV most popular?
- **Why** is MTV so popular? Why is MTV criticized?
- **How** does MTV affect today's youth?

2. <u>DOING THE RESEARCH</u>

Your topic and subtopics are the key words you will use to look up information for your paper. Remember you are not limited to the words in your subtopics; you might find additional information under related words and categories in the sources you consult.

As a starting point, consider the following types of sources:
- Books
- General Encyclopedias and Subject Encyclopedias
- Magazines, Newspapers
- Online Research Databases
- Search engines – Google, Yahoo

** Many reference books, encyclopedias, magazines and newspapers are now offered as a part of online research sources such as Gale Databases. Check the Media Center web page.

Evaluating Your Sources

It is important to determine which sources are most useful, reliable, and relevant. Be aware that large amount of available material on the Internet, while perhaps interesting to read, is not appropriate for a research paper because it lacks credibility, is not accurately documented, and may be nothing more than someone's personal opinion.

Note-Taking

Researchers use different methods to compile their information. The most fundamental approach is the use of note cards. Besides handwritten notes on index cards, a researcher may choose another system of organization, such as loose-leaf paper, a notebook, or word-processed computer files. Be sure to include title of source, page number(s) along with your summary, paraphrase, quotation or personal note.

Plagiarism

When you use someone else's material and call it your own without acknowledging the author/source, you are plagiarizing. This action is a form of stealing. Plagiarism is not limited to copying the exact words of a writer; when you copy the idea (by paraphrasing or summarizing), you still need to acknowledge the source. When you write your paper, you need to document all information that you use from a source – everything from direct quotations to summaries to paraphrases to ideas.

3. <u>CREATING A THESIS</u>

A thesis is a declarative, arguable statement that expresses and focuses the central idea of your paper. Your initial thesis will emerge from the research you have already conducted and the ideas you are beginning to formulate. Your thesis makes the argument that you will be developing and supporting in your paper. Furthermore, a thesis may be expressed in more than one sentence, but it should not go beyond two sentences. Your thesis is not written in stone. Many writers alter or revise the thesis as their research expands and their ideas develop.

The following approaches might be helpful:

• Cause/effect	The fascination with violence and comfort with complacency in today's youth can be directly linked to their viewing of MTV.
• Relationship	MTV has reshaped America's youth.
• Analysis	In idealizing and simplifying gender roles and relationships, MTV helps limit the expectations of today's youth.
• Theme	The prevalence of violence in music videos has desensitized today's youth to the realities of violence in American society.
• Compare/contrast	The influence of MTV on today's youth has been greater than that of VH-1.

4.   OUTLINING

Many writers dislike outlines because they require time and patience. The purpose of outlining is to help you arrange the parts of your paper into an organized and logical plan. It begins with a thesis and graphically organizes the body paragraphs

Guidelines for Outlining

A research paper has three definable sections: the introduction, body, and conclusion. While the introduction and conclusion may be single paragraphs, the body is comprised of multiple paragraphs. Following are general guidelines to observe when outlining.

1.   An introduction should follow the pattern
       below: I. Introduction
          A. Opener
          B. Thesis
          C. Preview
2.   The body paragraphs (there will be more than one paragraph) descend in the following pattern. The labels ensure that each idea is properly supported and analyzed for logical consistency.
       II. Subtopics
          A. Subdivision (topic sentence included in a body paragraph)
             1. Evidence #1
                a. Explanation of evidence
                b. Analysis/thesis reference
             2. Evidence #2
                a. Explanation of evidence
                b. Analysis/thesis reference
             3.   Concluding sentence
          B. Subdivision (topic sentence included in a body paragraph)
             1. Evidence #1
                a.   Explanation of evidence
                b. Analysis/thesis reference
             2. Evidence #2
                a. Explanation of evidence
                b. Analysis/thesis reference
             3. Concluding sentence
3.   The concluding paragraph should follow the pattern below:
          V. Conclusion
          A. Restatement of thesis
          B. Summary of body sections
          C. Closer

5.   **DRAFTING AND REVISING**

Drafting
With your outline completed, you are ready to begin your rough draft. Keep your outline and notes nearby as you begin to write. Your rough draft will include the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

Introduction
The introduction sets the tone for the rest of the paper. It should begin with an opener, which might be

- a question
- a definition
- an anecdote
- a fact/observation/statement
- a quotation (not from the analyzed text)
- an allusion
- or other idea

The introduction will also include the thesis and preview of how the paper will develop. The introduction is probably one of the most difficult parts of writing.

Body
The body paragraphs follow your outline and
- begin with a topic sentence that makes a point and references the thesis;
- emphasize the development of your own ideas;
- maintain coherence (remind the reader of the thesis);
- have transitions between and within paragraphs;
- integrate quotations, examples, and other information from your note cards.

Conclusion
Your conclusion should include
- a restatement of the thesis that addresses the development of your ideas
- a recognition of the relationship of ideas presented in the paper
- a closer that signals the importance of having argued the thesis and effectively ends the paper

The conclusion is not a verbatim restatement, but it is a way of looking back at where you began, where you have come, and how you were able to arrive there.

Revising
Now that you have finished drafting, revision is a way to review the paper as a whole. Proofreading is only part of the revision process. You can run grammar and spell checks, but you should not rely on them as the definitive editing tools. As you are reading and rereading, think about where you might need to add, delete, rearrange or clarify. An excellent way to check for smoothness is to *read your paper aloud* or have someone read it to you.

Examples for MLA Citations

These citation guidelines follow the format outlined the <u>MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers</u> (6th ed.).

PRINT SOURCES
One Author
Currie, Raymond E. <u>The Language and Symbolism of the New Media</u>. New York: Double Day, 1998.

Two or three authors
Wade, Alex and David Doane. <u>MTV and the Mainstream Media</u>. Minneapolis: Hedgehog Press, 1994.

Single work or essay from an anthology or collection
Case, Austin. "Male Stereotypes in MTV." <u>Media Casebook</u>. Ed. Barbara Newkirk. Los Angeles:

   Communications Press, 1997. 364.

Single previously published work or essay from an anthology or collection
Davis, Martin. "Telling Tales Visually." <u>Journal of International Communication</u>. March 1991: 68-72.

   Rpt. in <u>The Media Reader</u>. Los Angeles: New Press, 1997.

Book with more than three authors
Gravesend, Marjorie L., et al. <u>Understanding Contemporary Literature</u>. San Francisco: New Press, 1998.

Encyclopedia
"Communication." <u>Encyclopedia Britannica</u>. 1996 ed.

Multivolume Reference Work
"Michael Jackson." <u>Dictionary of Mass Media</u>. Ed. Jared Smith. Vol. 2. Los Angeles: Hollywood Press,

   1995. 125-28. 4 vols.

Signed article in a magazine
Atherton, Margaret. "MTV's image in the Media." <u>Studio Sound Journal</u>. Mar. 1998: 58.

Article in a scholarly journal
Corona, Edna. "MTV as Alternative Entertainment." <u>Journal of Media and Communications</u>. 20.5

   (1995): 42-49.

THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES WILL HELP YOU EASILY CREATE A BIBLIOGRAPHY:

NoodleTools (NoodleBib) (http://www.noodletools.com/)
Citation Machine (http://citationmachine.net/)
Easybib (http://www.easybib.com/)

<u>Documenting Sources within the Text</u>
Internal citations (also known as parenthetical citations) identify and give credit to the source from which you are providing information whether it is directly quoted, summarized, or paraphrased. Citations should be as concise as possible; their purpose is to refer the reader to the bibliographic entry on the Works Cited page. The citation, which usually includes the author's last name and page number, is included at the end of the sentence in which the borrowed information appears.

> In MTV's first five years, the production of music videos tripled (Atherton 58).

If you use the author's name in your sentence, you need to include only the page number(s) in your citation.

> Austin Case believes that MTV sparks the creative imagination of teenagers (41).

If you refer to a complete work rather than a specific section, you do not need to cite that work.

> In his book on contemporary media, Wade argues that parents place too much emphasis
>
> on the problems associated with music videos.

If the author's name is not available, look at the first word (or first few words) of your bibliographic entry, which will probably be a title. Use the first word or first few key words if necessary to indicate your source.

> The Department of Transportation reported a 10 percent drop in fatalities when
>
> passengers used shoulder harnesses and lap belts ("Seat Belts" 2).

If your Works Cited contains more than one work by the same author, put a comma after the author's name in the text and add the title of the work (if brief) or a shortened version and the relevant page reference.

> Willy Loman and John Proctor are both caught up in "dreams" of their own (Miller,
>
> <u>Death</u> 32).

Sample First Page of a Paper

8 ½ "
8 ½ "

1" margin

Font size
should be
12 point.

Font -
Times
New
Roman,
Arial, or
Helvetica.

Indent
paragraphs ½
" or 5 spaces

Jonathon Johns

Marlowe - 3

3/18/07

Name, class,
date and title
information
appear only on
the first page.

Double space

MTV: The Truth Behind the Videos

When MTV aired in 1980, its producers never anticipated the impact

the station would have on society. While most will admit to having

watched a video, it is the youth of America that have been most

influenced by the MTV phenomenon. The videos, the programs, and the

products endorsed in commercials have all been embraced and

simultaneously categorized according to gender stereotypes. In idealizing

Write in the
present
tense.

and simplifying gender roles and relationships, MTV helps limit the

expectations of the stereotypes, the narrow definition of gender

11"

relationships, and the connection between what is viewed on screen and

expected in reality.

A youth, sitting in front of his TV screen, watches as the men and

women in the video easily fit into pre-established gender stereotypes, thus

finding previous assumptions reinforced. This stereotyping occurs in

Underline titles
of longer works,
put quotation
marks around
titles of shorter
works.

Billy Joel's Uptown Girl. In the video, he works at a gas station and one

day becomes mesmerized by a beautiful woman. As the stereotypical

mechanic, he is dressed in dirty jeans and an old T-shirt. However, he is

obviously masculine, in control as he sings. When Christie Brinkely gets

out of her limousine, she is wearing a short skirt and high heels.

Always
spell out
numbers
below ten.

According to one critic, "although the backdrop is mundane, her attire is

more appropriate for a night on the town" (Case 365). What Joel

achieves in this scene is an illustration in the lyrics of a dichotomy

between the working class and the upper class.

1" margin

1" margins,
top, bottom
and sides

Don't use
contractions

Internal parenthetical
citation—note the
punctuation.

- 8 -

Sample Works Cited Page

1"

Works Cited

Atherton, Margaret. "MTV's Image in the Media." <u>Studio Sound Journal</u>. March

2004: 58.

"Behind the Scenes of MTV's Success." 27 July 2006. 30 July 1998

<http://www.ent..mtv/rus/com>.

Currie, Raymond E. <u>The Language and Symbolism of the New Media</u>. New York:

Doubleday, 2001.

Edgerton, David R, and George T. Leader. "Men and Women? The Dynamics of

Gender on MTV." <u>Media News</u> 12 May 1999: 43-4. Jan. 1999.

Marks, Laura. Personal interview. 15 Sept. 1998. "What Business Can Learn from

MTV." Editorial. <u>Business News</u>. 15 April 1996. sec. 3:18.

11"

Entries are
alphabetized by the
author's last name
or the first word of
the entry.

1" margins, top,
bottom and sides

Double space
throughout,
including the
entry and spaces
between entries.

NOT IN FORMAL WRITING, PLEASE

Do **not** use language that is vague, too informal, or ungrammatical. Do not use the following expressions in your writing.

a lot, lots of, bunches of, tons of	gonna, wanna, gotta
should of, could of, would of	til, till
stuff, things	get, got, gotta
you, I	cause, cuz (meaning "because")
being as, due to	guy, kid
an example is when, an example is where	in my opinion, no big deal
the author uses	contractions

Using Quotations in a Paper

NEVER just drop in a quotation.

> Hornbeck's feelings of superiority are apparent when he describes
>
> the town. "The unplumbed and plumbing-less depths! Ahhh,
>
> Hillsboro. Heavenly Hillsboro. The buckle on the Bible belt" (15).

DO NOT force a quotation to fit.

> Hornbeck's feelings of superiority are apparent when he describes
>
> the town and says, "The unplumbed and plumbing-less depths!
>
> Ahhh, Hillsboro. Heavenly Hillsboro. The buckle on the Bible belt" (15).

TRY TO ACHIEVE AN IDEAL blending of quotations.

> Hornbeck's feelings of superiority are apparent when he describes
>
> the town. He says that in "[t]he unplumbed and plumbing-less depths….[of] Heavenly Hillsboro
>
> (15), one can find "a few ignorance bushes" but "no tree of knowledge" (33)