

HANDOUT: ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

Research papers are the traditional way of organizing and presenting information. The best way to start your paper is to create an outline. It may be useful for you to physically write out your thoughts first, placing key events, points, and evidence on notecards and arranging them on a flat surface. This may give you a better idea about how exactly you would like to organize your paper.

Basic Outline

Introduction

- Use this section to *briefly* introduce your topic. Give the reader enough information to orient them about when and where your topic is happening. Don't spend a great deal of time explaining everything. That is what the rest of your paper is for.
- Your thesis should be included in this first paragraph as well. It should help to outline the rest of your argument for the reader.

Body Paragraphs

- Each of these paragraphs should make a point that *ties back to your thesis*.
- *Tell a story* with your writing. You want the information to be segmented and arranged in a way that flows from one point to the next.
- You may want to consider tools like *subtitles* to orient the reader and make it easier to fill in your information as you write.

Conclusion

The conclusion of an effective paper *restates* (in a slightly different way than the thesis) your argument and *summarizes* your evidence. Every sentence in this paragraph needs to be powerful and use an active voice. This is your final impression – so make it a good one!

Other Notes to Consider When Writing

Physically arrange your work on a flat surface. This often lets you see “the whole picture,” which normally can't fit on a computer screen.

Don't throw anything away! You may want to discard a lot of your work as you go because it doesn't seem useful to you. However, often people who read early drafts of your work may make suggestions to include a part you tossed away. Don't create more work by throwing parts away prematurely.

Pay close attention to grammar, writing style, and citation. Avoid redundant sentence structures (starting sentences the same way) and use a thesaurus to spice up your writing.