

Research? Why do we have to do this? Why do we have to cite our sources? What is plagiarism? Isn't a research paper where I get a bunch of quotes from the internet and shove them together?

And what in the world is MLA?

These questions (and others) are probably running through your mind at this moment.

Research involves finding information (new to you) and summarizing, paraphrasing, analyzing, collating, synthesizing, and ordering it to show a perspective, prove a point, or possibly change someone's mind on a topic.

Research is NOT just copy and paste. You will learn new ideas and bits of information. You will put them altogether into a coherent write up that show you understand what you have learned.

The endgame? You will be ready for Senior English. It should help you be ready for college. It is a 4-6 page paper (6-8+ for Honors), complete with a Works Cited page and parenthetical documentation, all following MLA format.

This packet is designed to guide you through the research, drafting, editing, rewriting, and completing stages of your paper.

Good luck!

Keys to a Successful Research Paper Experience

1. Meet all deadlines
2. Ask for help if you do not understand a step or an assignment
3. Keep track of all your notecards and drafts
4. Follow all the steps as they are laid out – you do everything for a reason
5. Don't panic – we will go step-by-step.

Materials Needed:

- Notecards
- File box or pencil pouch (for notecard storage)
- Rubber bands
- Pens and pencils

Information pertaining to MLA formatting and citations comes from:

The Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: MLA, 2009. Print.

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****Please note – this Research Paper Procedure Handbook is a work-in-progress. You may get extra pages as we go along!****

I. Topic

You will have been given a topic or asked to narrow one from a broad subject.

II. Notecards

You will write many notecards through this process. The first kind of notecard you will make is a source, or bibliographical, card. This is a card in which you will write the citation that will appear in your Works Cited at the end of your paper. This card will have all the pertinent information regarding your source.

I will give you just a few of the ways you will need to cite sources. So many websites have a citation generator that you may not need many guidelines (most articles available on the AVL have citations listed for you); I will give you some here, especially ones for books. **You can also look for citation patterns in the *MLA Handbook*, your *Pocket Style Manual*, or online (I recommend owl.english.purdue.edu). (Tip – some citation generating websites make mistakes – check their work, too.)**

- A. Source Cards (aka Bibliography Cards) – Many sources for information exist – some trustworthy and some not. I will ask you to do research in certain places to ensure that your information is sound and valid. I will require print and internet database sources.
- B. Most information for book citations will be found on the front and back of its title page. See your *MLA Handbook* or *Pocket Style Manual* for examples. NOTE: MLA has changed its citation procedures in their 8th edition. Some citations have less; some have more.

8th Edition MLA Guiding Principles

- 1 Author.
- 2 Title of source.
- 3 Title of container,
- 4 Other contributors,
- 5 Version,
- 6 Number,
- 7 Publisher,
- 8 Publication date,
- 9 Location.

C. Examples:

- a. Book by One Author

Lastname, Firstname. *Title*. Publisher, Year.

- b. Book by Two Authors

Lastname1, Firstname1, and Firstname2 Lastname2. *Title*. Publisher, Year.

- c. Book by more than two authors

Lastname1, Firstname1, Firstname2 Lastname2, and Firstname3 Lastname3. (and so on...)

- d. Website – DO NOT put the web address in your Works Cited. I do not require it; some teachers/professors might – check with them, please.

Editor or author name (if available). “Name of Page.” *Name of Site*. Name of sponsor,

publisher, or institution associated with site (if available), date of source creation

(if available). Medium of publication. Date of access.

Notice “if available” is listed multiple times above. Sometimes you cannot find all the information you need from a website to cite it in your works cited. Just put what you can; use **n.d.** if there is no publishing date, and use **n.p.** if there is no publisher listed.

What’s also really great is that most sources on the Alabama Virtual Library will give you the citation for the article – make sure to copy the MLA one down precisely. Right now, they are still using the 7th edition. You may have to make changes.

D. Taking Notes

- a. Notes are not just copied sentences or phrases from a source. You must read the information, digest it, understand it, and write it down on your notecard **in your own words**. This process will ensure that you understand the information for your paper.

- b. Tips

- i. ONE IDEA PER CARD! I cannot stress that enough! Before you start writing your outline and your paper, you will put the notecards in order. You cannot put one notecard in two places. Splitting up ideas later will just be more work then; do the work when you have time for research.
- ii. Follow the instructions on how to “code” your notecards. This will make the parenthetical/in-text citations very easy to do.
- iii. Try to give your card a “topic” so that when it comes time to group your cards, you have a sense of why you took that note down in the first place.

- c. “Coding” Your Cards

- i. After taking a bibliography card and labeling it with a number, you will label all cards taken from that particular source with the same number. This will ensure that you are easily able to do your in-text citations.
- ii. Write the number of the bibliography card and any notecards you take from that source in the upper right-hand corner.

- iii. Any time you take information from that source, use that number. If you visit the same website on a different day, that still counts as one source.
- d. It is very important that you get **page numbers** from your sources. Put the page number in the upper left-hand corner of your notecard. Even from many web sources, page numbers are available, so you should try to find them. It is proper to provide the page number from the source. It will also help you if you need to review the notes from that source.
- e. Types of Notecards – see pg. 102-105 of *A Pocket Style Manual* for more info
 - i. Summary – A summary is condensing a large passage into its main points; a summary does not rewrite everything from the passage but takes only the most important information. A summary should be in your own words. A **summary card** would be written about a few paragraphs – it would be only a sentence or two.
 - ii. Paraphrase – A paraphrase is writing a small bit of information in your own words. A **paraphrase card** would be a phrase, clause, or sentence.
 - iii. Direct Quotes – A direct quote is information copied word for word from a source. It must be put into quotation marks; this will ensure that you give credit to the source as these words are not your own. You should only have a few direct quotes when the source contains something so fabulous that you cannot help but want it in your paper.

III. Writing

A. Grouping Notecards

- a. You now need to sort your notecards by their topic for your paper. For example, biography cards go in one pile, writing influences go in another. If you are not sure, make a miscellaneous pile that you can sort again later. It is okay if you have notecards that do not belong in any pile – you might not use them in your paper (and that's okay!)
- b. You also might find that you are lacking in some sections for your paper. You may have to revisit some sources or find a new source (or sources) of information to fill up a paragraph. That's okay, too. You can make the outline and start writing the first draft as you seek out more information.
- c. Make sure to put rubber bands around your cards in groups so that you don't have to sort them more than once!

B. Ordering Notecards

- a. Once you have grouped your notecards, now you can begin putting the information in the order you want it to appear in your paper.
- b. Make sure that you do not have more than 2 ideas coming from the same source in a row. This is where taking the same information from multiple sources will come in handy.
- c. Write numbers on the back of your notecards so that you can keep them in order. You can rearrange them later if you need to, but number them so that, if they fall, you can easily put them back in order.

C. Outline

- a. Using the template you were given, create an outline for your paper. You can change this later if needed, but about now, you have done enough work that this is pretty much how your paper will go.
- b. Example for an author:

- I. Introduction
 - a. Thesis:
- II. Biography
 - a. Early Life
 - b. Career
 - c. Later Life
- III. Influence on Writing
 - a. Idea A
 - b. Idea B
 - c. Idea C
- IV. Themes in Writing
 - a. Idea A
 - b. Idea B
 - c. Idea C
- V. Criticism on Writing
 - a. Idea A
 - b. Idea B
 - c. Idea C
- VI. Conclusion

Other outlines will be made available to you because all students are not writing about an author – see Section ____ entitled “Other Outlines.”

You can use more than three ideas for your body paragraphs – this is just an example. You should not use less than three separate ideas for each body paragraph, however.

D. 1st Draft

- a. Following your outline, write your first draft. **You MUST put in all citations in this first draft.** As you write, have our source cards out in front of you so you can easily put the correct citation down. Put a citation after every idea. You should have at least 3 different sources per paragraph, with no more than two ideas in a row coming from the same source.

- b. Submit your draft via turnitin.com and wait for feedback. As soon as the draft has been read and feedback given, you should begin editing your first draft to create your second draft.
 - c. I will NOT look at your draft if the in-text citations/parenthetical documentation are not present.
- E. Works Cited
- a. As you are waiting for feedback on your first draft, you should be creating your Works Cited page. This page will contain all the sources you used in your paper. Put your source cards in alphabetical order (if you haven't already) by the first letter of the first entry. Type your sources into a Works Cited document, remembering to adhere to all MLA formatting guidelines.
 - i. Double-space the page
 - ii. Utilize hanging indent
 - iii. Pay close attention to punctuation within the bibliographical citation
 - iv. Do not put a source in your Works Cited unless you use it in your paper
 - v. Title the page Works Cited with no embellishments

**This research paper procedures guide is still a work-in-progress, but you have the information that you need to complete the assignment.

F. Other Outlines

Cause and Effect A

- I. Intro
- II. Causes (can/should be multiple paragraphs)
- III. Effects (can/should be multiple paragraphs)
- IV. Conclusion

Cause and Effect B

- I. Intro
- II. Cause 1
- III. Effect 1 (related to Cause 1)
- IV. Cause 2
- V. Effect 2 (related to Cause 2)
- VI. Other Causes
- VII. Other Effects
- VIII. Conclusion