

PLANNING FOR WRITING A RESEARCH ARTICLE

Writing a research article for a class assignment requires careful planning to ensure a well-structured and cohesive piece of work. The following steps outline an effective approach to planning your research article:

Step 1: Select a subject

Choose your subject carefully, keeping in mind the amount of time you have to write the paper, the length of the paper, your intended audience and the limits of the resources. Check in the library to make sure a reasonable amount of information is available on the subject you choose.

Writing the paper will be much easier if you select a subject that interests you and that you can form an opinion or viewpoint about. In fact, it will be easier later on to narrow the topic if you choose a subject you already know something about. However, avoid controversial and sensational subjects that are not scholarly, or too technical, or will only restate the research material.

Step 2: Narrow the topic

The topic of the paper is what you want to say about the subject. To narrow the topic, you need to read background articles about your subject in encyclopedias and other general references. Do not take notes at this time other than to jot down possible main

ideas.

As you read, ask questions like the following:

- Who are the important people involved?
- What are the major issues?
- What are my opinions regarding the topic?
- Why is this an important (controversial, interesting) subject?
- How has the problem (or issue) developed? When? Where?

The answers will help you narrow your topic. Remember to keep in mind the length of your paper.

Example of a topic for a five page paper:

Too broad: Sports are enjoyable.

Better, but still too broad: Swimming is enjoyable. (Answers the question, what sport is enjoyable?)

Narrowed topic: Swimming is enjoyable because _____. (Answers the question, why is swimming enjoyable?)

Narrowing the topic is a more complicated process for extensive research. General encyclopedias (like World Book) do not give enough information to get a broad overview of a subject, so instead you need to read specialized encyclopedias, abstracts, etc. At the reference desk in the Bender Library, there are reference guides in business and economics, humanities, history, politics and area studies, and language and literature. Ask the

librarian about these and other sources that might be useful to you. When you find the reference books that are available, read only to get an overview of the subject.

Step 3: State your objective or thesis

Before you begin your research for your paper, you need to compose a thesis statement that describes the viewpoint you are going to express and support in your paper. Since your purpose in the rest of the paper is to prove the validity of your thesis, your thesis statement provides a controlling idea which will help you choose the resource materials you will use and will limit your note taking.

Example:

Thesis statement: Ancient Greek culture is reflected in the lives of present day Greeks.

Controlling idea: "reflected in." The writer will look for materials that describe characteristics of ancient Grecian culture and characteristics of modern Grecian culture, and for any similarities between the two

Step 4: Form a Preliminary Bibliography

A preliminary bibliography is a list of potential sources of information. In addition to the card catalog and the guides to reference books already mentioned in Step 2, there are other sources which will help you locate articles and books relevant to your topic.

Evaluate the potential sources as you go along, keeping in mind

how well they relate to your topic, how up-to-date they are and how available they are. Watch for well-known authors and try to determine the point of view presented in the articles and whether they sound too technical or too simplistic.

Step 5: Prepare a Working Outline

A working outline is important because it gives order to your notetaking. As you do your research, you may find that you need to review your plan if you lack information about a topic or have conflicting information. Nevertheless, it provides a good starting point and is essential before you start to take notes.

Begin by listing the topics you want to discuss in your paper.(You should have a general idea of these from the reading you have already done.) Then, divide the items on the list into major topics and subtopics. An example of a working outline is presented below:

Thesis statement: Ancient Grecian culture is reflected in the present day Greeks.

Step 6: Start Taking Notes

After you have gathered your materials and prepare a working outline, you can start to take notes. Write your notes on index cards (either 3x5" or 4x6") being sure to include only one note on each card. Each note should relate in some way to one of the topics on your working outline. Label each card with the appropriate topic; then you can easily organize your note cards later when you begin to prepare the final outline of your paper.

Each note card should also include the title of the source of information and the page number to use later for footnoting. This is very important because you must cite all material even if you have not used the exact words of the text. Be sure to write the note in your own words; use direct quotes only when the information is worded in a particularly unusual way. To avoid overlooking any material, write on only one side of each card--if the note requires more space, use another card and label it accordingly.

Read the passage below and the sample note card that follows it. Pay particular attention to the paraphrasing that summarizes the content of the passage and the other items included on the card.

Thesis: Man's attempts to create a healthier and more prosperous life often have unforeseen detrimental effects upon the very environment he hopes to improve.

Step 7: Outline the Paper

The final outline is similar to the working outline, but is more complex, with each topic being further divided into several subtopics. To accomplish this, sort your note cards into separate piles according to the topics at the top of each them. Then, sort each pile into separate subtopics.

Your final outline also should reflect the organizational format you have chosen for your paper. This will depend on the topic of your paper and your thesis statement. For example, if the topic of your paper is the artistic development of a famous painter, you would probably want to use a chronological organization. However, if your paper is a discussion of the family life of

baboons and humans, a comparison-contrast format would be more appropriate.

Step 8: Write the Rough Draft

After you have completed your final outline, you can begin to write your rough draft. It is important to remember that this rough draft will be revised. Therefore, at this time, you do not need to worry too much about spelling or punctuation. Instead, you should concentrate on the content of the paper, following your outline and expanding the ideas in it with information from your notes.

Your paper should consist of three parts: the introduction, the body of the paper and the conclusion. The introduction should state the thesis, summarize the main ideas of the paper and capture the reader's interest. The body of the paper should develop each section of the outline. This is not difficult to do if you follow your outline and work through your note cards (which should be arranged to correspond with your outline) using the information from them to support the points you are making. Whenever you use information from a note card, remember to put a number at the end of the sentence. At the same time, write the footnote as it should appear in the paper at the bottom of the page you are working on or in list form on a separate sheet of paper. Number your notes consecutively throughout the paper. The conclusion should summarize your findings and restate the thesis.

Step 9: Edit Your Paper

When you have finished the rough draft, read through it again and revise it. Pay particular attention to the content and organization of the paper. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence that relates to the thesis? Is each idea supported by evidence? Are there clear transitions from one section to another, from your words to quotations? Are there clear transitions to indicate to the reader when one idea is ending and another one is beginning? Revision often requires many readings, each with its own purpose.

Step 10: Write the Final Draft

The final draft of your paper should be typed and must include citations and a bibliography; some paper might require a title page, depending on the formatting style and/or the professor. The title page should include the title of the paper, your name, the name of the course, the instructor's name, and the date the paper is due. Footnotes are a matter of style and you can check with your instructor on the format he/she prefers. In general, though, a footnote is indicated by an Arabic numeral raised a half space above the line, placed after the sentence or passage to which it refers. Footnotes may be arranged in numerical order at the bottom of the page on which they appear or a separate page (labeled Endnotes) placed at the end of the paper just before the bibliography.

The bibliography is simply a list of your sources; how it is arranged depends again on the formatting style (MLA/APA/etc).

Example through a Sample Writing

Title: The Interplay of Gods and Mortals in the Trojan War: A Study of Divine Intervention and Human Agency

Abstract:

This research paper examines the complex relationship between gods and mortals in the context of the Trojan War. Drawing upon Greek mythology and ancient literary sources, the paper explores how the interference of gods and the agency of mortal characters shape the events and outcomes of the war. It delves into the motivations and actions of deities, their influence on mortal decisions, and the consequences of their involvement. The paper argues that the interplay of gods and mortals in the Trojan War reflects the ancient Greek understanding of human nature, fate, and the limits of mortal power.

Introduction:

The Trojan War, a pivotal event in Greek mythology and literature, serves as a rich backdrop to explore the dynamic relationship between gods and mortals. This paper aims to analyze how the actions and interventions of gods affect the outcomes of the war, and conversely, how mortal agency and free will shape the course of events. By examining key instances of divine intervention and mortal decision-making, this study seeks to shed light on the interplay of gods and mortals and its significance within the narrative of the Trojan War.

1. The Motivations and Actions of Gods:

1.1 The divine favoritism: The gods' alignments and biases towards certain factions.

1.2 Personal desires and agendas: The gods' individual motivations influencing their involvement in the war.

1.3 Gods as puppeteers: Instances of gods manipulating mortals and events to further their own objectives.

2. Divine Intervention and Mortal Agency:

2.1 Direct interventions: Examples of gods actively intervening in battles and altercations.

2.2 Indirect influence: Gods guiding mortals through dreams, prophecies, and omens.

2.3 Mortal responses and choices: The influence of divine intervention on mortal decision-making.

3. The Consequences of Divine Intervention:

3.1 The impact on individual characters: Examining how gods' interventions shape the destinies and fates of mortal heroes and other individuals.

3.2 The ramifications for the course of the war: How divine actions alter the trajectory of the conflict and its ultimate outcome.

3.3 Moral implications and philosophical reflections: Reflecting on the role of divine intervention in the context of mortal agency and responsibility.

4. Human Nature, Fate, and the Limits of Mortal Power:

4.1 Mortal limitations and vulnerabilities: The mortal characters' struggles against the overwhelming power of gods.

4.2 Themes of hubris and nemesis: The consequences of mortals defying or challenging the gods.

4.3 Fate and free will: Exploring the tension between predetermined destiny and mortal agency.

Conclusion:

The interplay between gods and mortals in the Trojan War underscores the intricate relationship between divine intervention and human agency. While gods exert significant influence on mortal affairs, mortals also possess the power to shape their own destinies through choices and actions. This research illuminates the complexities and nuances of the divine-human dynamic within the context of the Trojan War, providing insights into ancient Greek perspectives on the nature of gods, mortals, and the intricacies of their interactions.

Keywords: Trojan War, gods, mortals, divine intervention, human agency, fate, Greek mythology, literary analysis.

Note: The sample research paper above provides an outline and key sections for an academic study on the topic. In an actual 10,000-word research paper, each section would be expanded with detailed analysis, supporting evidence, and appropriate citations from primary sources and scholarly literature.