

Research Paper Reference Guide

Grades 4 & 5

**Linden Public Schools
Linden, New Jersey**

FOR THE TEACHER

A NOTE TO THE TEACHER

The purpose of the research paper is to familiarize students with the research process. It was designed in binder format to provide you with materials to make facilitating the research process easier. Feel free to reproduce sheets as needed or to make overhead transparencies for whole class instruction.

Parents/guardians are an integral part of a child's education. Please include them in the research process. A sample parent letter to encourage their participation can be found in the appendix.

This binder consists of:

- Teacher Section
- Student Section
- Appendix

I hope you find this binder a valuable research resource.

Research Paper Requirements

1. Librarians and teachers across the curriculum need to use the same research criteria at their respective grade levels.
2. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Joseph Gibaldi, will be used as the definitive guide. In addition, materials appropriate for each grade level need to be provided.
3. A research report/ paper will be written at each grade level. This report will be based on the respective criteria for each grade level. Topics may be assigned from disciplines other than Language Arts.
4. The research paper will count as *one assessment grade* for the marking period.

Grade 4

- Choosing and limiting topics (developing thinking skills).
- Title page.
- Paraphrasing (paraphrasing on simple sentence by sentence basis).
- Appropriate level report.

Grade 5

- Review of Grade 4.
- Understanding format (i.e. title page, introductory statement, preparing a bibliography for books and encyclopedias.)
- Organizational skills (topic, sentences, major and minor details, maintaining central focus).
- Appropriate level report.

**TOPIC SUGGESTIONS FOR FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE
RESEARCH PAPER**

Battles of the American Revolution

Inventions of the 20th Century

Animal habitats and environments

Famous activists

Effects of Drug Abuse

Effects of Solar Energy

21st century technology

Automobiles through the ages

Writer's of the Constitution

Famous Children's Authors

Indian tribes and their dwellings

Famous Mathematicians

Civil War Battles

Slavery

Diabetes

Research Report Requirements Grades 4 & 5

Paper Due _____

I. Sources:

- Encyclopedia
- Book

Minimum Requirements _____ different types

II. Paper Length:

_____ pages

III. Title Page – no colorful covers or pictures

IV. Introductory paragraph

V. Conclusion

VI. Bibliography

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FOR THE STUDENT

A NOTE TO THE STUDENT

Whether you are a student in grade four or five, this style manual will help you to write effective research reports in all of your subjects.

The manual will guide you through a research process during which you will learn how to develop a topic, to improve your note-taking skills, to develop an outline, to produce a preliminary and final draft, and to prepare your final draft according to formal research form. The skills you develop with this manual and your teacher will provide you with the background you need for conducting more sophisticated research in high school, in college, and in your eventual career.

WHAT IS A RESEARCH REPORT?

Research means to “search again.” The purpose of research is to find existing facts and/or opinions from a variety of sources and to present them to support an opinion, which you have developed.

Preparing a research report will involve your ability to:

- gather information and think critically about it
- decide what your point of view is concerning the information
- organize the information carefully
- present the information in written and/or oral form

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH PROCESS?

Like the writing process, the research process follows a regular sequence of activities

A. PREWRITING ACTIVITIES

- Selecting a topic
- Identifying sources in the media center
- Organizing a direction and a purpose for reading
- Gathering materials
- Taking notes

B. DRAFTING ACTIVITIES

- Writing the first draft

C. REVISING ACTIVITIES

- Making sure your report is in the best possible order
- Adding details, examples, and/or quotations to make your report clear
- Deleting information, which does not support your topic statement
- Making sure the whole report sticks to the topic

D. EDITING ACTIVITIES

- Using standard written English
- Choosing the best vocabulary

E. PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES

- Preparing the report in correct research form

CHAPTER 1: GETTING STARTED

GOAL:

At the conclusion of this research project, you will be able to utilize language arts, social studies, science, and library media skills to develop and to prepare an original research report.

THE PROCESS:

A. SELECTING A TOPIC

1. Choose a research topic. (One may be provided for you by your teacher).

Talk with your teacher about your topic choice to make sure you understand your research task. Your teacher will also provide you with a written explanation of the research project's requirements, including:

- number and kind of sources;
- process of research;
- requirements of the final paper;

- deadlines;
 - grading policy;
2. Plan on conducting some of your research in school and some research at home.
 3. Plan to use several sources: one or more non-fiction books and an encyclopedia all provide good information. Your teacher will specify how many and what kind of sources is to be used.

B. IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE SOURCES IN THE MEDIA CENTER

1. To determine if a particular source is going to be valuable to you, you will need to survey the materials. It should take you no more than two or three minutes to survey each of your sources.

Here is how to do it:

Books: Review the table of contents and the index. Flip through the pages skimming to see if the text is too hard or too easy for you, if the illustrations are good, if there are maps and other reading aids. You will need to check the publication date to see if the material is outdated or recent.

Encyclopedias: Skim read the text to see if the text is too hard or too easy for you. Look for visual organizers such as bold face print, headings, etc. for guides to reading. Note the date of publication. If your report calls for current information, you usually cannot use an encyclopedia.

For each source you are trying to answer this question:

Is it likely that this source will give information that will help me to answer my research questions?

If the answer is “no,” return the source to the library shelf. In fact, if you cannot find any sources to help in answering the research questions, you may need to change your topic. However, it is better to change your topic of research at the beginning of the process rather than after you have spent many frustrating hours looking for sources.

If the answer is “yes,” you will need to prepare a “**Working Bibliography**” card for each source you plan to use. A **bibliography** is a record of a book or some other source.

C. PREPARING A WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

This is a simple procedure if you follow the directions carefully. Your teacher will show you a model and guide you through writing a bibliography.

WHAT MUST BE INCLUDED IN A BIBLIOGRAPHY?

- **AUTHOR**
- **TITLE**
- **PLACE OF PUBLICATION**
- **PUBLISHER**
- **DATE OF PUBLICATION**
- **PAGE NUMBER(S)** (For articles from magazines, journals, periodicals, newspapers, encyclopedias, or in anthologies).

You should bring this information to class so your teacher can help you prepare your bibliography.

A librarian can help you find the information.

D. LOCATING CURRENT INFORMATION

It is very important for you to decide on the kinds of information you will need.

For example, if you are doing a research report on Abraham Lincoln, the information you will be looking for does not have to be current or new. On the other hand, if you are doing a research report on the latest scientific breakthrough or the current president of the United States, you will need information that is less than three years old.

The most recent information you can find comes from newspapers, magazines, radio and television broadcasts, and computer databases. Books usually present information which is five years old or more. Encyclopedias may present information which is very old but which has been updated from time to time.

E. READING AND TAKING NOTES

After you have located your sources, the next step is to read, evaluate the material and take notes. There are generally speaking, two methods of note taking:

summarizing and paraphrasing.

Summarize if you want to record only the general idea of large amounts of material. If you require detailed notes on specific sentences and paragraph, but not the exact wording, you may **paraphrase**-that is, to restate the material in your own words. In taking notes, try to be both concise and thorough. Strive for accuracy. Careful note taking will help you avoid the problem of plagiarism.

F. PREPARING THE OUTLINE

Outlining is an important intermediate stage between research and writing. Your outline will provide the basis for organizing your paper. It will help you divide your manual into paragraphs, support your topic sentence, and arrange the information in your report.

Step 1. Turn your notes into an outline using lined notebook paper. In the outline:

- a. Bring related materials together under general headings and arrange these sections into a logical order. Each major heading will begin with a Roman numeral followed by a period. The first word of the main topic will be capitalized.
- b. The guide words will serve as categories for your outline. Each guide word will begin with a capital letter followed by a period. The first word of the category will be capitalized.
- c. Each subtopic will begin with an Arabic numeral the first word of the subtopic will begin with a capital letter. Each subtopic will begin with a capital letter followed by a period. The first word of each subtopic will be capitalized.

The following examples will help you to translate your notes to a formal outline.

TOPIC – Introduction

- I. Major Heading
 - A. Category
 - 1. Subtopic
 - 2. Subtopic
 - B. Category
 - 1. Subtopic
 - 2. Subtopic
- II. Major Heading
 - A. Category
 - 1. Subtopic
 - 2. Subtopic
 - B. Category
 - 1. Subtopic
 - 2. Subtopic
- III. Major Heading
 - A. Category
 - 1. Subtopic
 - 2. Subtopic
 - B. Category
 - 1. Subtopic
 - 2. Subtopic

Here is what a formal outline might look like when you have finished:

Topic: Farming Products of Hawaii

I. Sugar

A. Effect on economy

1. Biggest money making industry
2. Largest employer in the islands

B. Description

1. Sugar cane
 - a. Grass
 - b. Thick tough stalks
 - c. Set on fire to burn leaves
2. Milking process for refined sugar
 - a. Squeeze juice from cane
 - b. Clarify liquid
 - c. Place into waters

II. Pineapple

A. Effect on economy

1. Provides 70% of world's supply
2. World's largest cannery
3. Pineapple Institute
 - a. Research center
 - b. Improve care and production
 - c. Provide jobs

B. Uses

1. Food (fruit)
2. Livestock feed (trimmings)

G. PREPARING TO WRITE

Follow the steps below to get an idea of things you should be **thinking about** and **doing**, and some of the strategies, which will help.

Steps for preparing to write:

- Analyze and organize your information
- Construct an opening paragraph
- Weed out irrelevant information

Analyze and organize your information

The word “analyze” means to break something into its parts. A meaningful analysis identifies the parts and demonstrates how they relate to each other. You have information from different sources, which examines different aspects of your topic. By breaking down the information, you may be able to see relationships between the different sources and form them into a whole concept.

Constructing an opening paragraph

Before beginning to write the paper, write an opening paragraph. It should summarize the information you are presenting in four to five clear sentences.

H. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of a research paper, like other concluding paragraphs, should leave readers feeling satisfied. You should restate the information in the opening paragraphs. The reader should come away with more knowledge about your topic than they already knew.

Most concluding paragraphs follow one of these patterns:

- Provides a summary – The conclusion summarizes the main ideas of the paper and adds a wrap-up statement that brings the paper to a close.
- Reaches a conclusion – Sometimes the concluding paragraph pulls together the key points of the paper and draws from those points some opinion, judgment, result, an agreement, decision, resolution, deduction, or inference.

By writing a conclusion that closes the circle, you give readers a sense of completion, a sense of satisfaction in a job well done.

Finally, be sure your concluding paragraph introduces no new issues, no unanswered question, no otherwise unsupported ideas. A conclusion must only conclude.

I. WRITING THE PAPER

STEP 1. Take a piece of lined paper and writing on every other line, turn your outline into full sentences. Don't worry about spelling or punctuation. The purpose of this activity is to get your information on paper.

STEP 2. When you completed the first draft of your research report, you are ready to **revise** your report to improve the quality of your writing. Check the following:

- a. Is your report arranged effectively?
- b. Do you need to add details, examples, or quotations to make your report clear?
- c. Are there details, examples, or quotations in your report, which do not add to the clarity?
- d. Does your report stick to the topic?

STEP 3. When you are satisfied that your report is organized and clear, you will need to **edit** your writing. Check the following:

- a. Spelling
- b. Punctuation and capitalization
- c. Tense
- d. Word choice

STEP 4. Read your paper out loud, to yourself. See if the sentences make sense, when read aloud. Have several experienced people read and proofread your paper.

J. A WORD OF CAUTION

Writing a quality research paper takes a lot of time and work; therefore, you will want to make every effort to see that the work is completely your own and that you get full credit for it.

Students sometimes think that they can take short cuts by plagiarizing, that is, copying word for word from another author's text; or by paraphrasing, i.e., copying any of another author's words and changing only a few or rearranging the order of the sentences in another author's passage. This practice is *illegal, unethical, and completely unacceptable* for the student has given the impression that the work or ideas of an author are his/her own. Just to make sure that you do not plagiarize or paraphrase, even by accident:

1. Follow the directions for taking notes carefully.
2. Avoid using the author's words, sentences, or ideas.

CHAPTER 2: PREPARING THE FINAL DRAFT

Because a research paper is a formal presentation of your ideas, the format of the final draft becomes very important. You should follow certain guidelines in preparing the final paper for submission so that your presentation will reflect the pride you feel in your work.

Your final paper should consist of:

- Title page
- Text
- Bibliography

Your teacher may request that you include one or more of the following:

- Table of Contents
- Outline
- Chapter headings
- Subtopics
- Illustrations
- Original diagrams or charts

TITLE PAGE

The title page of your paper should be **centered** on the page. Do not underline or use quotation marks unless your title includes the title of a published work.

Example:

John F. Kennedy: An American Hero

Two-thirds of the page down from the top in the lower right-hand corner, single space:

- Your Name
- Teacher's Name
- Date

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

American Authors

John Mayo
Mrs. Cassidy
May 1, 2002

TEXT

1. Pages should be numbered.
2. Leave a one-inch margin on the left and right side of your paper.
3. Indent each paragraph.
4. Write on lined paper writing on every line in complete sentences. Leave an inch margin at the bottom of your paper.
5. Write on only one side of the page. Staple the final copy together in the upper left-hand corner. Use only one staple.

BIBLIOGRAPHY PAGE

1. Center the title on the top of the page. It will look like this:

Bibliography

Do not underline and do not use quotation marks.

2. Skip two lines before the first entry.
3. Alphabetize each book or encyclopedia by author's last name or the first word of a title or work without an author.
4. Begin the first line of each reference at the left-hand margin. Double-space each entry.

SAMPLE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography

Couch, Herbert Newell, and Russell M. Geer. *Modern Poems*. 7th ed.

New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1988.

Cummer, Wilson. "Poetry." Academic American Encyclopedia. 2000 ed.

Mills, Dorothy. The Book of Poetry. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1998.

APPENDIX