

Research Paper Guidelines

BPC History Department

The research paper involves several steps: taking notes, making note cards, developing a thesis statement, outlining the paper, writing the paper, and putting together a cover page and bibliography. The purpose of this packet is to illustrate the proper format and procedures for all of these steps. It is very important that you follow the guidelines; no points will be given for originality in the area of format.

Note taking

Notes may be typed or handwritten (pencil is fine). Use dashes, numbers, or bullets before each extract or fact to set it off from the others. Facts may be copied word for word (e.g. Columbus sailed to America in 1492; there were over 100,000 American casualties in the battle of the Bulge; Edward III was the King of England during the Black Death), but longer extracts should be either paraphrased or copied word for word but bracketed by quotation marks (see below for a model). Write the name of the source at the beginning of the notes extracted from it and place page numbers in the right hand margin next to the last piece of extracted material from a page.

Sample notes page

From *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*

- the Sino-Japanese War was fought in 1895
- Scholar Kang Youwei expressed the anger many Chinese felt in his writings, p. 29
- "Kang 's upbringing had been similar to that of many wealthy Chinese of the time" p. 30
- "Kang developed a sublime self-confidence in his destiny and in his power to mold the future: p.31
- Many scholars, including Kang- wanted China to Westernize more p.32

From *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985*

- "Protestant missionaries and the Chinese local elite were as natural enemies as cats and dogs" p.125
- Chinese beliefs about ancestor worship conflicted with Christianity and few Chinese converted. p. 126
- The Taiping Rebellion took place from 1850 to 1864 p. 128

Note cards

Once you have completed your research you will want to organize your facts. A useful way to do this is to write all related facts on 3x5 note cards and then begin to look for common themes and take out extracts or facts which you will not need. If you can, label each card with an appropriate title or generalization which expresses what the facts on the parentheses (see section on "Documenting Sources").

Sample note card:

Effects of Sino-Japanese War on China

- China ashamed at losing to rival Japan
- China pushed out of Korea, Taiwan
- Japanese advantages in technology, industry were decisive (Spence, p. 29)
- Many Chinese scholars began to call for Westernization
- Kang Youwei was among the leaders of this movement (Spence, p. 32)

Outlining

After organizing your information onto note cards you need to develop a thesis statement and outline your paper. What comes first, the thesis or the outline? That may depend. Sometimes you can clearly see where the paper is going to go from the first, and sometimes it takes putting all the sub-topics together before a clear thesis materializes. In any case, your completed outline should look like this.

- I. Thesis: Communism came to China from the west after many attempts at reform and modernization had failed.
- II. Western influences before 1895
 - A. Missionaries bring Christianity from the 1600's
 - B. Trade at Canton in the 1700's
 - C. The Unequal Treaties of 1838-1864
 - D. America's "Open door" policy
- III. The Effects of the Sino-Japanese War
 - A. Sense of shame
 - B. Chinese losses
 - C. Chinese weaknesses exposed
 - D. Calls for Westernization

- IV. Republican Revolution of 1911
 - A. Sun Yat-sen
 - B. October 10 revolt
 - C. Overthrow of the Imperial government
 - D. Republican assembly of 1912

Although the length of the assignment will vary, a longer outline for a longer paper would proceed along these lines, with each Roman numeral representing the contents of a single paragraph. You do not need to outline a conclusion, though one will be expected in the paper.

Writing the Report

As noted above, each section of your outline represents the contents of a single paragraph in the paper. Sometimes you will find in the writing of the paper that a section you outlined should appropriately be broken into two or more paragraphs. Don't worry about changing it in the outline, but go ahead and change it in the paper. This is a formal paper, so you need to avoid slang, but don't feel like you need to sound sophisticated or "academic." Be yourself, but remember that you are writing on a serious topic. Additionally, now you will need to add an introduction paragraph and closing paragraph. Below are discussed the three types of paragraphs you will write.

Introduction

The two goals of the introduction are to get the reader's attention and to communicate your thesis. In constructing this paragraph, you should begin with a general discussion of the topic and work up to your thesis, which should be the last of second-to-last sentence in the paragraph.

Body Paragraphs

Begin each body (or "supporting") paragraph with a topic sentence which states generally what you are covering in that paragraph (hint: think of it as a mini-thesis statement). Then discuss your supporting points, being sure to relate how each point relates to the generalization made in the topic sentence. Close the paragraph by summarizing what you have demonstrated in the paragraph, selecting words which will provide smooth transition into the next paragraph.

Closing Paragraph

In the closing paragraph you should summarize the main points you have made in the paper and try to leave your reader with something to think about or a sentence which will leave a lasting impression.

Documenting Sources

Your information needs to be documented in two places, in the body and at the end.

Documenting Within the Body

Within the body, you show where you got your information by writing the author's name and the page number at the end of the last sentence or idea taken from that author in the paragraph. You should give credit for two types of information:

- Information which is copied directly from the source (and, therefore, placed in quotation marks).
 - Information that is written in your own words (i.e. paraphrased) but contains key words or ideas from another source.
- You **do not** need to list an author and page number when the information you are using is considered common knowledge. Basic facts (dates, names of presidents of kings, names of events, etc.), or information found in an encyclopedia, a general internet site, or a textbook on the subject are usually regarded as common knowledge. Another way to approach it is to ask, "Would someone who teaches on this subject know about this or not?" Recent research, whether from books, internet sites, or periodicals, are the kinds of sources which will most need to be cited. It is not an easy thing to know, of course, so the best idea is always to put it in if you are not sure.

A sample paragraph follows:

Losing the war helped bring about the first calls for reform. The war had exposed how far behind China was from Japan in modernizing its industry and economy, and the nation felt a sense of corporate shame for this difference. Furthermore, the war exposed China's military weaknesses and people began to feel more vulnerable. Many intellectuals, like Kang Youwei, began to call on the government to rapidly westernize. Kang especially stressed that this could be accomplished without China losing its Chinese identity. "If Japan can do it, so can we," was the logic behind his arguments (Spence, pp. 29-32).

Documenting at the End (Bibliography)

You should have a separate page at the end which lists, alphabetically by author's last name (or title if no author is provided), all the sources you have used in your report. Even sources which were used to get "common knowledge" facts should be listed. You may single-space the information, but the second line of each entry should be indented like a paragraph (i.e. at least five spaces) and there should be a line in between each entry.

Underline or italicize titles of books or periodicals; titles of magazine articles, internet articles, and other shorter works should be placed in quotation marks.

Use the following general guidelines. Yes, all the punctuation is important! Samples of other, more specific, types of entries can be found in Write Source 2000, ppo. 231-232 (Houghten Mifflin, 19999). Also, many good dictionaries, style manuals, and desk references provide information on how to do bibliographies.

Book

Author (last name first). Title of the book. City where the book is Published:
Publisher, copyright date.

Magazine/Periodical

Author (last name first). "Title of the article." Title of the Periodical. Day month
year: page numbers.

Internet Site

Author or editor (Last name first). "Title of the article." Site title or a description of
it. Web manager or administrator. Post date. Date accessed.
<electronic address>.

Title Page and First Page

The last thing you will do is add a title page. The following information should be included and centered on the page.

Title

(bold or underlined; perhaps larger than the rest of the text)

Your name

Class split and class title

Teacher's Name

Due date

On the first page of text you should put the first two items (title and your name) at the top center.