

The Research Paper

- You should by now have an idea of the area you wish to research
- You have a bibliography
- You have outlined a possible project
- You have started to collect material on the project area.
- You have started to read material

What is `research`

- Can be interpreted in many ways and does not mean that you have to do something entirely original. You may have collected no primary research material at all.
- Can be a re-interpretation of some-else's ideas.
- Bringing together two different things to make a point.
- Be an assessment based on bring together material in a new way (interdisciplinary).
- Have a particular model/analysis method to impose on old material.

Make a skeleton outline

- Constantly review the material with a view to the purpose of the project.
- Be prepared to reject material you have worked on – always hard to do.
- Ordering material. The internal form. Can be chronological – Origins, crisis, aftermath, plus introduction and conclusion added afterwards. Or problem based – Introduction and statement of problem, aspects of the problem, attempted solutions.

Write a rough draft

- Outline prepared – avoid using he/she if you can and use passive voice.
- Based on ordering/re-ordering and writing up the collected notes and discarding material that is no longer relevant.
- Use a word processor and expect to generate many many versions.

Final Draft

- Best to leave the final draft for a while and then approach it critically as an outsider.
- Get footnotes into shape and keep it consistent (follow your own conventions and keep to one of the approved styles).
- Get the flow of material right – the chain of evidence and reasoning should be easy to follow.
- Additional material – if the material re-inforces rather than enlightens then put in into a footnote or if long an appendix.

Extras

- Once all the writing is done do the bibliography (from the footnotes in the main).
- Then write the conclusion and make sure it addresses the opening brief that you state. It should be circular in argument. The formal aim of the paper should be stated in the opening paragraphs and the conclusion should return to the opening and examine the original purpose in the light of the data assembled.
- Do (redo) the abstract (normally c.200 words) which summarises the whole.

Be clear about your audience

- Is it lay or specialist? – you can assume specialist.
- Minor information that may be of general interest can be ignored (or better put into a footnote), or put in an appendix.
- Do not clutter your work with information that is not fully relevant. Keep the ideas to the fore – but show on the way that you know your way around all the material well.
- Check for accuracy – of everything – facts, footnotes, etc. Verify your references. As always be very careful about plagiarism.
- Check your tenses – simple past tense is best – but occasional use of present to enliven can help

Abstract

- Single paragraph that summarises the study.
- Should describe the intentions of the study, the methodology used, and the principal findings.
- Think of it as precis of the entire research effort.

Assessment criteria

- Read as a conference paper; presentation is important. Full text may need to be summarised (20 minutes max).
- Ability to communicate ideas, methods and results within in time.
- Is the write up `publication ready' with full referencing and citations. All usual essay conventions apply here – presentation, knowledge, interpretation.
- Does it suggest fruitful research has been undertaken – emphasis is on it being a **research** paper not an essay.