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How Do You Produce a Final Draft?

Because academic research projects represent a first level of serious professional work, they must meet exacting standards as you bring them to completion. These requirements vary from discipline to discipline, but the principles and concerns examined in this section apply to most college research papers and projects. (See also Chapter 5.)

48a Is the organization solid?

In many cases, you'll find yourself refining and narrowing the scope of your research project throughout the writing process, as you develop a structure that reinforces clear, though not necessarily simple, points. Your job is to create a framework that will make your project an effective response to the original assignment. See Section 5a-6 for more tips on improving the organization of a paper.

◆ **1 Narrow or qualify your claim.** The shape you give your project will depend on what your thesis promises. You'll want your thesis to make a distinct and provable claim, and then you will need to follow through with the appropriate support and evidence. Here's an example of such a progression.

ORIGINAL CLAIM

Zoos promote cruelty to animals.

CLAIM SPECIFIED AND LIMITED BY RESEARCH

Confining large marine mammals in sea parks for public amusement is a form of cruelty to animals.

COMMITMENTS

- Find legal/popular definitions for "cruelty to animals."
- Define specific criteria for "cruelty."

- Examine what experts say about the condition of animals in marine parks, or do fieldwork in such a park.
- Find statistics on animal health in marine parks.
- Find expert opinions on both sides of the issue.
- Show that conditions in marine parks meet (or do not meet) criteria for “cruelty to animals.”

❷ **Test your organization.** Organizing a sizable paper or project is rarely an easy job. For the draft of a long paper, you may want to check the structure using a method such as the following:

- **Underline the topic idea, or thesis, in your draft.** It should be clearly stated somewhere in the first few paragraphs.
- **Underline just the first sentence in each subsequent paragraph.** If the first sentence is very short or closely tied to the second, underline the first two sentences.
- **Read the underlined sentences straight through as if they formed an essay in themselves.** Ask whether each sentence advances or explains the main point or thesis statement. If the sentences—taken together—read coherently, chances are the paper is well organized.
- **If the underlined sentences don’t make sense, examine whether the paragraphs are clearly related to the topic.** If the ideas there really do not develop your thesis in some way, delete the whole paragraph. If the ideas are related, consider how to revise the paragraph to make the connection clearer to readers.
- **Test your conclusion against your introduction.** Sometimes the conclusions of essays contradict their opening paragraphs because of changes that occurred as the paper developed. Revise as necessary.

48b Is the format correct?

Whether you are reporting your research in a conventional paper, on a Web site, or through some other less traditional vehicle, you want the presentation to be effective. Here we focus chiefly on research papers, but you can find advice about crafting other types of projects in Part 4, “Design and Shape of Writing.”

❶ **Pay attention to the format of work you submit.** Be sure a paper is submitted on good-quality white paper. Print on only one side of the sheet, double-spacing the body of your essay. Keep fonts simple and use boldface rarely, perhaps to highlight important headings.

Specifications for MLA and APA papers are given in Sections 50c and 51c, respectively. These guidelines, which explain where page numbers go, the widths of margins, and the placement of headings, can be applied even to papers that don't need to follow a specific professional style.

❷ **Insert tables and figures as needed.** Use graphics whenever they help readers understand your ideas better than words alone can.

MLA format requires that you label tables (columns of data) and figures (pictures, illustrations, or maps), number them, and briefly identify what they illustrate. For a table, place the label *Table* followed by an Arabic number above the item and flush left; the title or description of the table follows on a separate line. Any source information is listed under the table.

Table 21.1

First-Year Student Applications by Region

	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Difference	Percent Change
Texas	12,022	11,590	432	+4
Out-of-state	2,121	2,058	63	+3
Foreign	756	673	83	+11

For a figure or image, the label *Figure* appears (usually abbreviated *Fig.*) flush left beneath the item, followed by an Arabic number and a caption on the same line. To point to an image from within the text of an essay, use the following form: (see fig. 7).

When writing a paper in APA style, check the detailed coverage of figures and tables in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

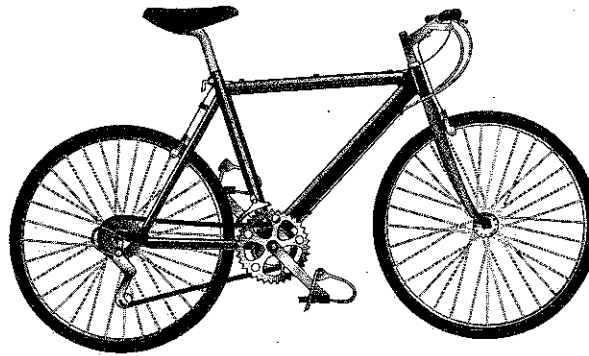


Fig.7 Mountain bike.

● **3 Be consistent with headings.** MLA style (described in detail in Chapter 50) provides fairly open standards for headings. Titles of MLA papers are ordinarily centered on the first page of an essay and headings appear in the text, flush with the left-hand margin. If you descend to a second level, you'll have to distinguish second-level heads by numbering or lettering them or by setting them off typographically (usually by variations in capitalization or underlining). MLA style leaves it to you to decide how you will handle such choices, but in all cases, you must keep the headings clean, unobtrusive, and consistent. Here is one way of handling headings as they might appear in a moderately long MLA-style paper on mountain biking.

Mountain Biking and the Environment	Title
The Mountain Bike	1st level
History of Mountain Biking	1st level
Mountain Bikes and the Environment	1st level
<u>Trail Damage</u>	2nd level
<u>Conflicts with Hikers</u>	2nd level
Mountain Bikes and Responsible Riding	1st level

APA style (described in Chapter 51) is more specific about headings. For major APA papers or articles you submit for publication, consult the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

• **4 Include all the components your project requires.** Before you submit a project, reread the specifications of either the instructor or the professional society whose guidelines you are following. A research paper typically follows a specific order:

- Title page (not recommended in MLA; required in APA)
- Outline (optional; begins on its own page; requires separate title page)
- Abstract (optional, but common in APA; usually on its own page)
- Body of the essay (Arabic pagination begins with body of the essay in MLA; in APA, Arabic pagination begins with title page)
- Content or bibliographic notes (optional)
- Works Cited/References (begins on its own page separate from the body of the essay and any content or bibliographic notes)

• **5 Submit your project professionally.** Whether you've written a paper, designed a brochure, or created a Web site, be sure the work meets appropriate standards. Examine what you've produced to see that everything looks professional: the writing is sharp and correct, the images are crisp and labeled, page numbers are in the right place, any links are operative, and the documentation is solid.

Don't overdo it. For a paper, bind the pages modestly with a paper clip. Nothing more elaborate is needed, unless an instructor asks you to place the essay (still clipped) in a folder along with all the materials you used in developing it. As a general rule, keep the bells and whistles (and gaudy colors) to a functional minimum.

Checklist 48.1 Research Project Requirements

- Have you placed your name, your instructor's name, the date, and the course name on the first or title page?
- Is the title centered? Are its major words (see Section 41b-5) capitalized? Your title should not be underlined or appear between quotation marks.
- Did you number the pages? Are they in the right order?
- Have you used quotation marks and parentheses correctly and in pairs? (The closing quotation mark or parenthesis is often forgotten.)

(Continued)

Research Project Requirements (Continued)

- Have you placed quotation marks around all direct quotations that are shorter than four lines?
- Have you indented all direct quotations of four or more typed lines (MLA) or of forty words or more (APA)?
- Have you remembered that indented quotations are *not* placed between quotation marks?
- Did you introduce all direct quotations with some identification of their author, source, or significance?
- Did you use the correct form for parenthetical notes?
- Have you handled titles correctly, italicizing the titles of books and putting the titles of articles between quotation marks?
- Did you include a Works Cited or References list? Is your list of works cited alphabetized? Did you indent the entries correctly?