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Writing from Research

We conduct informal research all the time. We examine various models and their options before buying a car, and we check out another person informally before proposing or accepting a first date. We sometimes search the classified ads to find a summer job, or we roam the mall to find a new tennis racket, the right pair of sports shoes, or the latest CD. Research, then, is not foreign to us. However, in the classroom, we begin thinking about a serious and systematic activity, one that involves the library, the Internet, or field research.

A research paper, like a personal essay, requires you to choose a topic that you care about and to invest many hours in thinking about it. However, unlike a personal essay, you develop your ideas by gathering information and reading sources. As you pull your project together, you continue to express personal ideas, but now they are supported by and based on the collective evidence and the opinions of experts on the topic.

Some instructors prefer the description “researched writing,” for this type of writing grows from investigation, and the research is used in different ways, in different amounts, and for different purposes. Each classroom and each instructor will make different demands on your talents. The guidelines here are general; your instructors will provide the specifics.

This text therefore introduces research as an engaging, sometimes exciting pursuit on several fronts—your personal knowledge, ideas gleaned from sources, and research in the field.

1a

Why Do Research?

Instructors ask you to write a research paper for several reasons:

Research teaches methods of discovery. A research project asks you to discover both what you already know about a complex topic and what others can teach you. The discovery process will usually include reading, and it often requires or motivates you to venture into the field for interviews, observation, and experimentation. You may not arrive at any final answers or solutions, but you will come to understand the different views on a subject. In your final

paper, you will synthesize your ideas and discoveries with the knowledge and opinions of others.

Research teaches investigative skills. A research project requires you to investigate a subject, grasp the essentials of it, and disclose your findings. The exercise teaches important methods for gaining knowledge on a complex topic. Your success will depend on your negotiating the various sources of information, from reference books in the library to computer databases and from

For tips on finding material on the Internet and beyond, examine Chapter 4, pages 54–77.

special archival collections to the most recent articles in the printed periodicals. The Internet, with its vast amounts of information, will challenge you to find “reliable” sources. If you conduct research by observation, interviews, surveys, and laboratory experiments, you will discover additional methods of investigation.

Research teaches critical thinking. As you wade through the evidence on your subject, you will learn to discriminate between useful information and unfounded or ill-conceived comments. Some sources, such as the

See Chapter 7, pages 102–22, for help with finding reliable sources.

Internet, will provide timely, reliable material but may also entice you with worthless and undocumented opinions.

Research teaches logic. Like a judge in the courtroom, the research paper asks for your perceptive judgment about the issues surrounding a specific topic. Your decisions about the issues, in effect, will be based upon the wisdom gained from research about the topic. Your paper and your readers will rely upon your logical response to your reading, observation, interviews, and testing.

Research teaches the basic ingredients of argument. In most cases, a research paper requires you to make a claim and support it with reasons and evidence.

For help with making a claim and establishing a thesis, see 1c, pages 3–8.

For example, if you argue that “urban sprawl has invited wild animals into our backyards,” you will learn to anticipate challenges to your theory and to defend your assertion with evidence.

1b Learning Format Variations

Scholarly writing in each scholarly discipline follows certain conventions; that is, special forms are required for citing the sources and for designing the pages. These rules make uniform the numerous articles written internationally by millions of different scholars. The society of language and literature scholars, the Modern Language Association, has a set of guidelines generally known as the MLA style. Similarly, the American Psychological Association has its own APA style. Other groups of scholars prefer to use a footnote system, while others use a numbering system. These variations are not meant to con-

fuse; they have evolved within disciplines. The most important for you, right now, is to determine which position instructors will ask you to use.

MLA Style, pages 224–76
APA Style, pages 277–309
Chicago Footnote Style, pages 310–35
CBE Number Style, pages 336–51

footnote style but could just as easily be organized accordingly.

1c Understanding a Research Paper

Beyond picking a good topic, you will find that literature instructors might expect you to analyze the structure of a story or poem. Education instructors might expect you to discuss the merits of a testing program. History instructors might expect you to discuss the causes and consequences of an event, perhaps the causes and consequences of the American Revolution.

Your inquiry is often a response to a question. For example, “Do children receive medication for hyperactivity?” Another student considered “the effects of tissue and organ transplantation from deceased donors.” (See pages 323–35 for a list of topics and questions that can motivate your research.) Your research should cover what others are saying.

Understanding the Terminology

Assignments in literature, history, science, to *interpret*, *evaluate*, and *perform* are common. In psychology, political science, and business, you usually require *analysis*, *definition*, *proposal*. In the sciences, you usually require a discussion of the *implications*.

Evaluation

To evaluate, you first need to establish a context. You explain how the subject meets the criteria of faculty members are based on your progress, a thorough knowledge of the subject. Similarly, you may be asked to judge the quality of a computer software. Your first step should be to ask a good question: How important is the software to the architecture? You can't judge the quality of the software without need to experience it.

fuse; they have evolved within disciplines as the preferred style. What is important for you, right now, is to determine which format to use. Many composition instructors will ask you to use MLA style, as explained primarily in Chapters 11–14, but they are just as likely to ask for APA style (Chapter 15) if your topic concerns one of the social sciences. In a like manner, your art appreciation instructor might expect the Chicago Manual's footnote style but could just as easily request the APA style. Ask early and organize accordingly.



MLA Style, pages 224–76

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1c

Understanding a Research Assignment

Beyond picking a good topic, you will need a reason for writing the paper. Literature instructors might expect you to make judgments about the structure of a story or poem. Education instructors might ask you to examine the merits of a testing program. History instructors might want you to explore an event, perhaps the causes and consequences of Desert Storm, the war on Iraq.

Your inquiry is often a response to a question, such as “Should school children receive medication for hyperactive behavior?” One student, Gena Messersmith, gathered evidence to answer affirmatively in her paper (see pages 300–09). Another student considered this one: “Has medical science advanced tissue and organ transplantation faster than the public has kept pace with donations?” (See pages 323–35 for Adele Gelvin’s paper.) Different kinds of topics and questions can motivate you to explore your own thoughts and discover what others are saying.

Understanding the Terminology

Assignments in literature, history, and the fine arts will often require you to *interpret*, *evaluate*, and perform *causal analysis*. Assignments in education, psychology, political science, and other social science disciplines will usually require *analysis*, *definition*, *comparison*, or a search for *precedents* leading to a *proposal*. In the sciences your experiments and testing will usually require a discussion of the *implications* of your findings.

Evaluation

To evaluate, you first need to establish clear criteria of judgment and then explain how the subject meets these criteria. For example, student evaluations of faculty members are based on a set of expressed criteria—an interest in student progress, a thorough knowledge of the subject, and so forth. Similarly, you may be asked to judge the merits of a poem, art show, or new computer software. Your first step should be to create your criteria. What makes a good movie? How important is form to a poem? Is space a special factor in architecture? You can’t expect the sources to provide the final answers; you need to experience the work and make your final judgments on it.

Let's see how it develops with one student who was asked to examine the Title IX statute. Being female, she quickly asserted its value for providing funds and integrity to women's athletic programs. But upon entering the intellectual conversation as found in the literature on the topic, she developed several ideas on an argument that Title IX does not damage men's programs.

The same evaluative process would apply to other subjects. For example, Katie Hebert (see pages 210–23) conducted her inquiry on how nutritional foods might prevent disease. Her work produced not only a few answers but charts showing the relative values of such foods. In many ways, every research paper is an evaluation.

Interpretation

To interpret, you must usually answer, "What does it mean?" You may be asked to explain the symbolism in a piece of literature, examine a point of law, or make sense of test results. Questions often point toward interpretation:

What does this passage mean?

What does this data tell us?

Can you explain your reading of the problem to others?

For example, your instructor might ask you to interpret the Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, interpret test results on pond water at site A and site B, or interpret a scene from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Definition

Sometimes you will need to provide an extended definition to show that your subject fits into a selected and well-defined category. Note these examples:

1. Slapping a child on the face is child abuse.

You will need to define child abuse and then show that an act of slapping fits the definition.

2. Title IX is a law, not an option, for athletic programs.

You will need to define the law in detail.

3. Plagiarism should be considered a criminal misdemeanor.

You will need to define a criminal misdemeanor and prove that plagiarism fits the definition.

4. Cheerleaders are athletes who deserve scholarships.

You will need to define "athletes who deserve scholarships" and find a way to place cheerleaders within that category.

These examples demonstrate how vague and illusive our language can be. We know what an athlete is in general, but the argument needs a careful analysis of the term "scholarship athlete." The writer will need to work carefully to reach agreement with the reader about the terminology. What's more, the writer will need to define in some detail the term "cheerleader."

A good definition usually includes the leaders), the class to which the subject belongs from others in this class (gymnast). The scholarship athlete. If the writer can as mast, then the argument might have more Definition will almost always be the terminology is subjective. If you mean by "cruel" and explain why animals that are not human. Thus, d Definition is also necessary.

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Proposal

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2. We should and demonstrate
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The writer will need to work carefully about the terminology. What's more, the writer will need to define the term "cheerleader."

A good definition usually includes three elements: the subject (cheerleader), the class to which the subject belongs (athlete), and the difference from others in this class (gymnast). The assumption is that a gymnast is a scholarship athlete. If the writer can associate the cheerleader with the gymnast, then the argument might have merit.

Definition will almost always become a part of your work when some of the terminology is subjective. If you argue, for example, that medical experiments on animals are cruel and inhumane, you may need to define what you mean by "cruel" and explain why human standards should be applied to animals that are not human. Thus, definition might serve as your major thesis.

Definition is also necessary with technical and scientific terminology, as shown by Gena Messersmith (see pages 300-09). She understood Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) because her daughter was diagnosed with ADHD. Yet Messersmith also needed a careful, detailed definition of the medical disorder, not merely a discourse on the behavioral problems of her daughter. By her inquiry, she reached her conclusion that medication, not behavior modification, would best serve children who have ADHD.

Thus, most writers build their paper on an issue that gives them a reason for inquiry and investigation of their own attitudes and beliefs as well as ideas from written sources, interviews, observation, and other research methods.

Proposal

This type of argument says to the reader, "We should do something." It often has practical applications, as shown by these examples:

1. We should change the annual yearbook into a semiannual magazine because student interest, participation, and response to a yearbook are extremely poor.
2. We should cancel all drug testing of athletes because it presumes guilt and demeans the innocent.
3. A chipping mill should not be allowed in this area because its insatiable demand for timber will strip our local forests.

As shown by these examples, the proposal argument calls for action—a change in policy, a change in the law, and sometimes an alteration of accepted procedures. Again, the writer must advance the thesis and support it with reasons and evidence.

In addition, a proposal demands special considerations. First, writers should convince readers that a problem exists and is serious enough to merit action. In the example above about chipping mills, the writer will need to establish that, indeed, chipping mills have been proposed and perhaps even approved for the area. Then the writer will need to argue that they endanger the environment: they grind vast amounts of timber of any size and shave timber into chips that are reprocessed in various ways. As a result, lumberjacks cut even the immature trees, stripping forests into barren wastelands. The unstated assumption is that clear-cutting damages the land.

Second, the writer must explain the consequences to convince the reader that the proposal has validity. The paper must defend the principle that clear-cutting damages the land, and should show, if possible, how chipping mills in other parts of the country have damaged the environment.

Third, the writer will need to address any opposing positions, competing proposals, and alternative solutions. For example, chipping mills produce chip board for decking the floors of houses, thus saving trees that might be required for making expensive plywood boards. Without chipping mills, we might run short on paper and homebuilding products. The writer will need to note opposing views and consider them in the paper.

Adele Gelvin's inquiry into organ and tissue donation includes a proposal (see pages 323–35). It explains the problem—that donors are needed—and the consequences—people are dying as they wait for certain organs. Along the way, Gelvin dismisses the many myths about tissue and organ donation and proposes that her readers sign a donor card.

Causal Argument

Unlike proposals, which predict consequences, causal arguments show that a condition exists because of specific circumstances. That is, something has caused or created this situation, and we need to know why. For example, a student's investigation uncovered why schools in one state benefit greatly from a lottery but not in another.

Let's look at a student who asked the question: Why do numerous students, like me, who otherwise score well on the ACT test, score poorly in the math section of the test and, consequently, enroll in developmental courses that offer no college credit? This question merited his investigation, so he gathered evidence from his personal experience as well as from data drawn from interviews, surveys, critical reading, and accumulated test results. Ultimately, he explored and wrote on a combination of things—poor study skills by students, bias in the testing program, and inadequate instruction in grade school and high school. He discovered something about himself and many things about the testing program.

Sarah Bemis, a student writer, used a similar kind of causal argument in her essay on diabetes management (see pages 344–51). Bemis traces the causes for the disease and then examines the methods for controlling it: medication, diet, and exercise.

Comparison and Analogy

An argument often compares and likens a subject to something else. You might be asked to compare a pair of poems or compare stock markets—Nasdaq with Dow Jones. Comparison is seldom the focus of an entire paper, but it can be useful in a paragraph that compares, let's say, the banking policy of Andrew Jackson with that of his congressional opponents.

On the other hand, an analogy is a figurative comparison that allows the writer to draw several parallels of similarity. For example, the human circulatory system is like a transportation system with a hub, a highway system, and a fleet of trucks to carry the cargo.

Shannon Williams, a student writer, considered using comparison in a couple of ways for her paper on the poet Langston Hughes (pages 204–09). She saw Hughes as a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance just as Shakespeare served the Elizabethan Renaissance and as Ralph Waldo Emerson inspired the American Renaissance. She also considered the willingness of Hughes to use the vernacular language, which compares favorably with the music writers of today, such as rap artists.

Precedence

Precedence refers to conventions or customs, usually established in the past. In judicial decisions, it is a standard set by previous cases, a *legal precedent*. Therefore, a thesis statement built on precedence requires a past event that establishes a rule of law or a point of procedure. As an example, let's return to the argument against the chipping mill. If the researcher can prove that another mill in another part of the country ruined the environment, then the researcher has a precedent for how damaging such an operation can be.

The sample papers printed within this book also demonstrate the use of precedence. Shannon Williams (204–09) argues that Langston Hughes set a precedent for the use of African American vernacular in poetry. Katie Hebert (210–23) suggests that the precedent for healing foods was set long ago in tribal medicine, and Sarah Bemis (344–51) indicates that the precedent of diet and exercise to maintain diabetic balance might be just as important, if not more so, than some medications.

Implications

If you conduct any kind of test or observation, you will probably make field notes in a research journal and tabulate your results at regular intervals. At some point, however, you will be expected to explain your findings, arrive at conclusions, and discuss the implications of your scientific inquiry. Lab reports are elementary forms of this task. What did you discover and what does it mean?

For example, one student explored the scientific world of drug testing before companies place their products on the market. His discussions had chilling implications for consumers. Another student examined the role of mice as reservoir carriers of Lyme disease. This work required reading as well as field research and testing to arrive at final judgments. In literature, a student examined the recurring images of birds in the poetry of Thomas Hardy to discuss the implications of the birds in Hardy's basic themes.

In review, fit one or more of these arguments to the context of your project:

Evaluation

Interpretation

Definition

Proposal

Causal Argument

Comparison and Analogy
Precedence
Implications

1d Establishing a Schedule

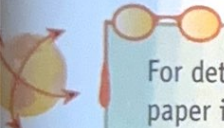
The steps for producing a research paper have remained fundamental for many years. You will do well to follow them, even to the point of setting deadlines on the calendar for each step. In the spaces below, write dates to remind yourself when deadlines should be met.

- *Topic approved by the instructor.* The topic must have a built-in question or argument so that you can interpret an issue and cite the opinions found in the source materials.
- *Reading and creating a working bibliography.* Preliminary reading establishes the basis for your research, helping you to discover the quantity and quality of available sources. If you can't find much, your topic is too narrow. If you find far too many sources, your topic is too broad and needs narrowing. Chapter 3 will explain the process of finding reliable, expert sources.
- *Organizing.* Instructors will require different types of plans. For some, your research journal will indicate the direction of your work. Others will ask for a formal outline. In either case, see Chapter 6.
- *Creating notes.* Begin entering notes in your computer or on note cards. Write plenty of notes and collect a supply of photocopied pages, which you should carefully label. Some notes will be summaries, others will need carefully drawn quotations from the sources, and some will be paraphrases written in your own voice. Chapter 9 explains these various techniques.
- *Drafting the paper.* During your writing, let your instructor scan the draft to give you feedback and guidance. He or she might see further complications for your exploration and also steer you clear of any simplistic conclusions. Drafting is also a stage for peer review, in which one or more classmates look at your work. The instructor may also have classroom workshops that will offer in-class review of your work in progress. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 explain matters of drafting the paper.
- *Formatting the paper.* Proper manuscript design places your paper within the required design for your discipline, such as the number system for a scientific project or the APA style for an education paper. Chapters 14-17 provide the guidelines for the various disciplines. See also Appendix A.
- *Writing a list of sources.* You will need to list in the proper format the various sources used in your study. Chapters 14-17 provide documentation guidelines.

— *Revision and proofreading.* Be conscientious about examining your manuscript and making all necessary corrections. With the aid of computers, you can check spelling and some aspects of style. Chapter 13 provides tips on revision and editing.

— *Submitting the manuscript.* Like all writers, you will need at some point to “publish” the paper and release it to the audience, which might be your instructor, your classmates, or perhaps a larger

group. Plan well in advance to meet this final deadline. You may publish the paper in a variety of ways—on paper, on a disk, on a CD-ROM, on your own website.



For details about preparing the research paper in an electronic format, see Chapter 18, pages 352–62.

2

Finding a Topic

An informed choice of a subject is crucial for fulfilling the research assignment. You might be tempted to write from a personal interest, such as “Fishing at Lake Cumberland”; however, the content and the context of your course and the assignment itself should drive you toward a serious, scholarly perspective: “The Effects of Toxic Chemicals on the Fish of Lake Cumberland.” This topic would probably send you into the field for hands-on investigation, just what causal analysis might require.

You will need a special edge or angle. The topic “Symbolism in Hawthorne’s Fiction” has no originality, but “Hester Prynne in the 21st Century” has a touch of originality. Similarly, “The Sufferings of Native Americans” could be improved to “Urban Sprawl in Morton County: The Bulldozing of Indian Burial Grounds.” Shannon Williams on page 204 considered the title “Langston Hughes: Father to the Rap Artists,” to relate the historical poet to the contemporary scene. Yet keep in mind that your special position need not appear in the title. Gena Messersmith’s essay on pages 300–09 was driven by her own experiences with her hyperactive child.

In another example, you might be tempted by the topic “Computer Games,” but the research assignment requires an evaluation of issues, not a description. It also requires detailed definition. A better topic might be “Learned Dexterity with Video and Computer Games,” which requires the definition of learned dexterity and how some video games promote it. Even in a first-year composition class, your instructor may expect discipline-specific topics, such as:

EDUCATION:	The Visually Impaired: Options for Classroom Participation
POLITICAL SCIENCE:	Conservative Republicans and the Religious Right
LITERATURE:	Kate Chopin’s <i>The Awakening</i> and the Women’s Movement
HEALTH:	The Effects of Smoking during Pregnancy
SOCIOLOGY:	Parents Who Lie to Their Children

These topics produce inquiry-based learning or problem-based learning. That is, your inquiry into the issues or your effort to solve the problem will

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C H E C K L I S T***Narrowing a General Subject into a Working Topic***

Unlike a general subject, a working topic should:

- examine one significant issue, not a broad subject.
- address a knowledgeable reader and carry that reader to another plateau of knowledge.
- have a serious purpose, one that demands analysis of the issues, argues from a position, and explains complex details.
- meet the expectations of the instructor and conform to the course requirements.

empower the learning process. When your topic addresses such issues, you have a reason to:

- Examine specific sources in the library, on the Internet, and in the field.
- Share your investigation of the issues with the reader.
- Write a meaningful conclusion.

This chapter will help you mold a general subject into a workable topic. It explains how to relate your personal ideas to a scholarly problem (see 2a), how to use interviews and chat groups (2b), how to search computer sources for issues worthy of investigation (see 2c), how to examine the library's sources (see 2d, 2e, 2f, 2g), and how to write a proposal with an effective thesis (2h and 2i).

2a**Relating Your Personal Ideas to a Scholarly Problem**

Try to make a connection between your interests and the inherent issues of the subject. For instance, a student whose mother became seriously addicted to the Internet developed a paper from the personal experiences of her dysfunctional family. She worked within the sociology discipline and consulted journals of that field. Another student who worked at Walmart, developed a research project on discount pricing and its effect on small-town shop owners. She worked within the discipline of marketing and business management, reading appropriate literature in those areas. Sarah Bemis, whose paper appears on pages 344-51, researched a variety of sources for information on diabetes, a topic that concerned her because diabetes had afflicted both her grandmother and her mother. Begin with two activities:

1. Relate your experiences to scholarly problems and academic disciplines.
2. Speculate about the subject by listing issues, asking questions, engaging in free writing, and using other idea-generating techniques.



Connecting Personal Experience to Scholarly Topics

You can't write a personal essay and call it a research paper, yet you can choose topics close to your life. Examine your responses to television shows, magazine articles, friends and associates, the workplace, and your leisure-time activities. Then use one of the techniques described below:

1. Combine personal interests with an aspect of academic studies:

PERSONAL INTEREST: Skiing
ACADEMIC SUBJECT: Sports medicine
POSSIBLE TOPICS: "Protecting the Knees," "Therapy for Strained Muscles," or "Skin Treatments"

2. Consider social issues that affect you and your family:

PERSONAL INTEREST: The education of my child
SOCIAL ISSUE: The behavior of my child in school
POSSIBLE TOPICS: "Children Who Are Hyperactive"
"Should School Children Take Medicine to Calm Their Hyperactivity"

3. Consider scientific subjects if appropriate:

PERSONAL INTEREST: The ponds and well water on the family farm
SCIENTIFIC SUBJECT: Chemical toxins in the water
POSSIBLE TOPIC: "The Poisoning of Underground Water Tables"

4. Let your cultural background prompt you toward detailed research into your roots, your culture, and the mythology and history of your ethnic background:

ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Native American
PERSONAL INTEREST: History of the Apache tribes
POSSIBLE TOPIC: "The Indian Wars from the Native American's Point of View"

ETHNIC BACKGROUND: Hispanic
PERSONAL INTEREST: Struggles of the Mexican child in an American classroom
POSSIBLE TOPIC: "Bicultural Experiences of Hispanic Students: The Failures and Triumphs"

HINT: Every discipline, whether sociology, geology, or literature, will limit a discussion to analytical categories that require detailed study, such as the *demographics* of a target audience (marketing), the *function* of loops and arrays (computer science), or *observation* of human subjects (psychology). Part of your task is learning the terminology and using it appropriately.

Speculating about Your Subject to Discover Ideas and to Focus on the Issues

At some point you may need to sit back, relax, and use your imagination to contemplate the issues and generate ideas worthy of investigation. Ideas can be generated in the following ways:

Keeping a Research Journal

Unlike a diary of personal thoughts about your daily activities or a journal of creative ideas, such as poems, stories, or scenarios, the research journal is a place to record ideas in one source book or computer file. It can feature a list of issues, sets of questions, miscellaneous notes, and bits of free writing, as shown in the example below. A notebook with pockets provides space for photocopied materials and other loose papers. If you keep the journal on a computer file, you can download materials from the Internet and use a scanner for other items.

Free Writing

To free write, merely focus on a topic and write whatever comes to mind. Do not worry about grammar, style, or penmanship, but keep writing nonstop for a page or so to develop valuable phrases, comparisons, personal anecdotes, and specific thoughts that help focus issues of concern. Below, Katie Hebert explores certain aspects of her topic (see pages 210–23 for the final version):

Although I do not advocate canceling all future doctor appointments, it seems clear to me that functional foods have exhibited strength in the fight for cancer prevention and the control of coronary heart disease. These are two causes of a tremendous number of deaths in America each year. So Americans are taking a new serious look at foods high in the antioxidants found in Vitamin C, E, and beta-carotene, as well as fatty acids, soluble fiber, and green and black teas. Disease prevention makes better sense to me than late-in-life attempts to heal a disease.

This free writing has set the path for this writer's investigation into the role of diet in controlling illness. She has found her position—that prevention through diet has merit.

Listing Key Words

Note fundamental terms and concepts that might focus the direction of your research. One student, while considering a topic on Langston Hughes, listed several terms and phrases associated with the poet:

Harlem Renaissance	vernacular language	jazz verse
race relations	racial oppression	racial pride
jazz music	poetic symbolism	racial strength

These key words set the stage for writing the rough outline, as explained on the following page.

Arranging Key Words into a Rough Outline

As you develop ideas and begin listing key terms and subtopics, you should recognize the hierarchy of major and minor issues.

Langston Hughes

Harlem Renaissance

The rise of African American poetry and music

Language

The use of the vernacular

Personal integrity

African American pride

Symbolism

Symbols of strength and dignity

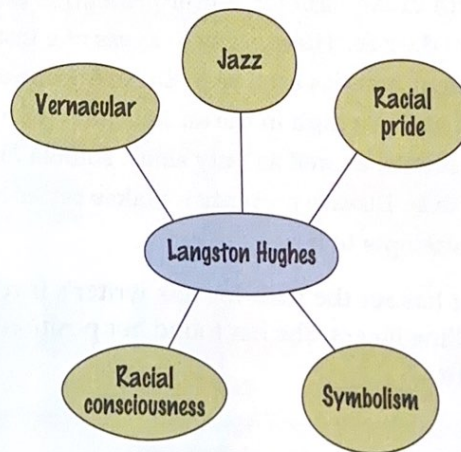
Jazz

The new rhythms of Harlem

This initial ranking of ideas would grow in length and mature in depth during Shannon Williams's research process (see pages 204-09 for her paper).

Clustering

Another method for discovering the hierarchy of your primary topics and subtopics is to cluster ideas around a central subject. The cluster of related topics can generate a multitude of interconnected ideas.



Narrowing by Comparison

Comparison limits a discussion to specific differences. Any two works, any two persons, any two groups may serve as the basis for a comparative study. Historians compare Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant. Political scientists compare conservatives and liberals. Literary scholars compare the merits of free verse with patterned verse. However, the study should focus on issues, as shown below in a preliminary outline in which Katie Hebert (see

pages 210–23) compares the various properties of foods to determine those best suited for maintaining good health. She also compares the economic and health benefits:

Economic benefits

lower cost of food
rising cost of medicine

Health benefits

lower cholesterol
less heart disease
may prevent cancer

The plan limits the discussion to potential benefits of food, which include both economic and health benefits.

Asking Questions

Stretch your imagination with questions.

1. General questions examine terminology, issues, causes, etc. For example, having read Henry Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience," one writer asked:

What is "civil disobedience"?
Is dissent legal? Is it moral? Is it patriotic?
Is dissent a liberal activity? Conservative?
Should the government encourage or stifle dissent?
Is passive resistance effective?

Answering the questions can lead the writer to a central issue or argument, such as "Civil Disobedience: Shaping Our Nation."

2. Rhetorical questions use the modes of writing as a basis. One student framed these questions:

COMPARISON: How does a state lottery compare with horse racing?

DEFINITION: What is a lottery in legal terms? In religious terms?

CAUSE/EFFECT: What are the consequences of a state lottery on funding for education, highways, prisons, and social programs?

PROCESS: How are winnings distributed?

CLASSIFICATION: What types of lotteries exist and which are available in this state?

EVALUATION: What is the value of a lottery to the average citizen?
What are the disadvantages?

3. Academic disciplines across the curriculum provide questions, as framed by one student on the topic of sports gambling.

ECONOMICS: Does sports gambling benefit a college's athletic budget?
Does it benefit the national economy?

PSYCHOLOGY: What is the effect of gambling on the mental attitude of the college athlete who knows huge sums hang in the balance on his/her performance?

HISTORY: Does gambling on sporting events have an identifiable tradition?

SOCIOLOGY: What compulsion in human nature prompts people to gamble on athletic prowess?

4. Journalism questions explore the basic elements of a subject: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? For example:

WHO? Athletes

WHAT? Illegal drugs

WHEN? During off-season training and also on game day

WHERE? Training rooms and elsewhere

WHY? To enhance performance

HOW? By pills and injections

The journalist's questions direct you toward the issues, such as "win at all costs" or "damaging the body for immediate gratification."

5. Kenneth Burke's *pentad* questions five aspects of a topic: act, agent, scene, agency, purpose.

WHAT HAPPENED (THE ACT)? crucifixion scene in *The Old Man and the Sea*

WHO DID IT (AGENT)? Santiago, the old fisherman

WHERE AND WHEN (SCENE)? at the novel's end

HOW DID IT OCCUR (AGENCY)? Santiago carries the mast of his boat up the Cuban hillside

WHAT IS A POSSIBLE MOTIVE Hemingway wanted to make a martyr

FOR THIS EVENT (PURPOSE)? of the old man

Example from a journal entry:

The crucifixion scene in Hemingway's *The Old Man and Sea* shows Santiago hoisting the mast of his boat on his shoulder and struggling up the Cuban hillside. Hemingway suggests Christian connotations with this scene, so I wonder if, perhaps, he has used other Christian images in the novel.

This researcher can now search the novel with a purpose—to find other Christian images, rank and classify them, and determine if, indeed, the study has merit.

Talking with Others to Refine the Topic

Personal Interviews

Like some researchers, you may need to consult with your instructor or sit on a park bench with a friend. Explore a subject for key ideas while hav-

ing coffee or a soda with a colleague, relative, or work associate. Ask people in your community for ideas and for their reactions to your general subject.

For example, one writer had considered "organ donation" as her possible topic. While chatting with a few friends, one said, "I heard about this guy who went to a party and woke up the next morning in a bathtub full of ice. His kidneys were stolen for sale on the black market." The writer, Adele

Adele Gelvin's paper on organ and tissue donation can be found on pages 323-335.

Gelvin, seized upon the absurdity of this urban legend and decided to explore the myths surrounding the topic of organ donation.

Casual conversations which contribute to your understanding of the subject need not be documented. However, the conscientious writer will credit a formal interview or an in-depth discussion with an expert. Also, when participating in a collaborative research project, you will surely want each member of the team to receive credit for the work accomplished.



Internet Discussion Groups

What are other people saying about your subject? You might use the computer to share ideas and messages with other scholars interested in your sub-

See 4h, pages 71-72, for a more complete discussion of listserv and chat groups.

ject. Somebody may answer a question or point to an interesting aspect which has not occurred to you. With discussion groups you have a choice:

- E-mail news groups in which you post a message to a listserv site and then wait for the reply.
- MUD and MOO discussion groups on the Internet. These are multi-user domains explained in greater detail in section 4h, page 71.
- Real-time chatting with participants online at the same time, even with audio and video in some cases.

For example, your instructor may set up an informal classroom discussion list and expect you to participate online with her and your fellow students. You and your classmates will correspond by e-mail messages. In other cases, the instructor might suggest that you investigate a specific site, such as [alt.religion](#) for a religious subject or [alt.current-events.usa](#) for a paper on gun control laws. [Alt.religion](#), for example, offers these news groups among a list of about 50:

[alt.religion.wicca.moderated](#)
[alt.religion.scientology](#)
[alt.religion.jehovahs-witn](#)
[alt.religion.christian.roman-catholic](#)
[alt.religion.mormon](#)
[alt.religion.christian](#)

CHECKLIST

Exploring Ideas with Others

- Consult with your instructor.
- Discuss your topic with three or four classmates.
- Listen to the concerns of others.
- Conduct a formal interview (see pages 78–79).
- Join a computer discussion group.
- Take careful notes.
- Adjust your research accordingly.

By joining, you become a part of the open forum on fairly specific topics, which can help you narrow your work to one issue. Note: Some members do not like the intrusion of uninformed newcomers, so you should probably

“lurk” at first, read any FAQs (frequently asked questions), and get a feel for the group before posting your queries.

For additional information on discussion groups see section 4h, pages 71–72.

You can find discussion groups by going to www.tile.net, which catalogs thousands of lists by name, description, and domain and which also provides instructions on how to subscribe and unsubscribe. Real-time chatting is becoming more and more popular as machines increase in speed and capacity. Some programs, such as CUSeeMe, support video and audio exchanges (try it at www.cuseemeworld.com). Thus, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) enables you to conduct online interviews as well as discuss your topic and your findings.

2c

Using the World Wide Web to Refine Your Topic

An article or two on the World Wide Web can give you tips about how others approach the subject, which might enable you to focus on a specific issue. The online articles might also provide links to additional articles.

See also Chapter 4, pages 54–77 for detailed information about Internet searches.

Using an Internet Subject Directory

Many search engines have a directory of subjects on the home page. This list will enable you to move quickly from a general subject to a specific topic. This type of search will be hierarchical; that is, each mouse click narrows the topic. For example, one student studying Thomas Jefferson consulted *AltaVista*'s subject categories and clicked on **Reference**, where she found

Using an Internet

To find sites quickly entering “American history” will produce a page like this. Links to search the files by from there you can search years, the Andrew Jackson and Internet search engines w example one student entered

See Chapter 4, pages 63–65, for details with keyword searches on the Internet.

robly and discovered other keywords. She realized that she had

2d Using the Library's Electronic to Narrow the Subject

Now college libraries now have electronic databases of CD-ROMs. Professors and students are going in search of every resource in

Archives, then *Early American Archives*, and eventually *Early American Review*, a journal that featured an article on "Jefferson and His Daughters." Although it appears time consuming, the search occurs quickly. Within minutes you will be examining the words of others speaking on your subject.

HINT: The Internet has made it difficult to apply traditional evaluations to an article: is it accurate, authoritative, objective, current, and thorough in coverage? Some Internet sites are advocates for special interests, some sites market products or sprinkle the site with banners to commercial sites, some sites are personal home pages, and many sites offer objective news and scholarly information. The answers:

1. Go to the reliable databases available through your library, such as *InfoTrac*, *PsycINFO*, *UMI ProQuest*, *Electric Library*, or *EBSCOhost*. You can reach these from remote locations at home or the dorm room by connecting to your library. They are monitored sites that give information filtered by editorial boards and peer review. Many articles on the Internet appeared first in print. Yet all articles must be examined with a critical eye.
2. Go to the website accompanying this book for additional tips on methods for evaluating Internet sources, with examples, at www.ablongman.com/lester.

Using an Internet Keyword Search

To find sites quickly, enter the keywords for a specific topic. For example, entering "American history manuscripts" at one of the browsers such as *Google* will produce a page like that shown in Figure 2.1 on the following page. It has links to search the files by keyword, name or subject, and chronological list. From there you can search for documents on the Puritans, the Jeffersonian years, the Andrew Jackson administration, and so forth.

Internet search engines will force you to narrow your general subject. For example, one student entered "Internet+addiction," which brought up thousands of sources. By tightening the request to the phrase "Internet addiction," enclosed within quotation marks, she cut the list considerably and discovered other keywords: cyber-wellness, weboholics, and netaddiction. She realized that she had a workable topic.

See Chapter 4, pages 63–65, for detailed help with keyword searches on the Internet.

2d

Using the Library's Electronic Databases to Narrow the Subject

Most college libraries now have electronic databases, such as *InfoTrac*, *Silverplatter*, or *UMI ProQuest*. Unlike a general search engine with multiple spiders going in search of *every* mention of your keywords, these database

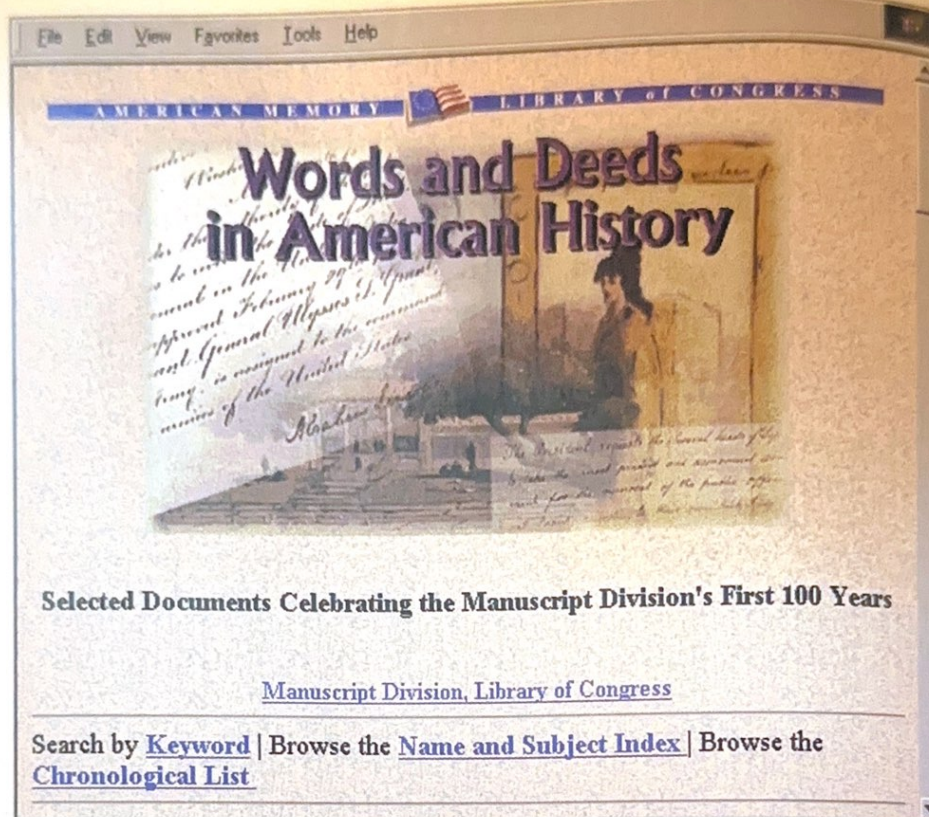


FIGURE 2.1. A Library of Congress site "Words and Deeds in American History," found by using a keyword search for American history manuscripts.

Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Congress.

files are reliable because they refer you to thousands of magazine and journal articles that have been either peer reviewed by experts or filtered through magazine and newspaper editorial processes. In many cases you can read an abstract of the article and often read or print the full text of an article. Libraries will vary in their electronic databases, so be sure to consult with the reference librarians. Follow these steps:

1. Select a database. Some databases, such as *UMI ProQuest*, are general; others focus on one discipline (for example, *PsycINFO* indexes psychological sources and *ERIC* indexes educational sources). *InfoTrac* is a general database with several divisions on health, contemporary authors, and general academic topics. These databases will move you quickly to a list of articles on your topic.

2. Enter a key phrase that describes your topic, enclosed within quotation marks. Avoid using just one general word. For example, the word *food* on the *EBSCOhost* database produced 10,000 possible sites. The two-word phrase "healing foods" produced a manageable twenty-two sites. Here are six of the twenty-two entries:

1. *Healing foods could keep you healthy, wealthy and wise.* By: Schrader, Michael; Nation's Restaurant News, 06/19/2000. Vol. 34 Issue 25, p34, 1/3p Full Text

2. *Eat These Healing Foods*. Runner's World, Nov99, Vol. 34 Issue 11, p29, 2/5p Full Text
3. *Healing Foods*. Psychology Today, Jul/Aug99, Vol. 32 Issue 4, p24, 1/4p Full Text
4. *Big E*. By: Ball, Aimee Lee; Harper's Bazaar, Aug99 Issue 3453, 4p Full Text
5. *Healing Foods*. By: Martin, Jeanne Marie; Total Health, Feb94, Vol. 16 Issue 1, 3p Full Text
6. *Healing Foods*. By: Kane, Ed; Cats Magazine, Jul98, Vol. 54 Issue 7, 5p, 1 chart Full Text

3. Examine the list for relevant articles and browse the descriptions, the abstracts, and in some cases the full text.

A researcher would need to look at the list of entries above and consider possibilities, dismissing 1, 2, and 3 because they are too short, $\frac{1}{3}$ page being the longest. Number 4 has four pages in *Harper's Bazaar*, a woman's magazine; checking it reveals that the Big E is *estrogen*, which plays important roles in a woman's body—the researcher should read it for relevance since the full text is available. Number 5 has three pages from *Total Health*, a relevant magazine—again, the researcher should read it since the full text is available. Number 6 can be dismissed because it's devoted to cats, not humans.

Thus, the researcher has two of six articles that might shed light on the topic. That's probably about the average for the library databases. The ratio will worsen when the researcher goes to a general search



For more information on evaluating a set of listed sources, see pages 102–22 and also this book's website at www.ablongman.com/lester.

engine like *AltaVista* or *Google*, where maybe two of twenty titles will suggest relevance.

2e Using a Library's Electronic Book Catalog

College libraries now have computerized indexes to their holdings. Called by different names at each library (e.g., *Acorn*, *Felix*, *Access*), a computerized index lists all books housed in the library, plus film strips, video tapes, and similar items. It will not index the titles of articles in magazines and journals, but it will tell you which periodicals are housed in the library and whether they are housed in printed form or on microforms. Like the electronic databases, described in 2d, it will help you find a workable topic by guiding you quickly from general subjects to subtopics and finally to specific books. It will confirm that your subject has been treated with in-depth studies. Instructors will want to see a few books in your bibliography, so follow these steps:

1. Enter a topic that will generate a reasonably sized list. Katie Hebert, for example, first entered "food" and found 326 entries. She shifted to "nutrition" for 266 records. "Nutritional food" produced just one entry,

Your Search: Subject Keyword = "diet therapy"
 Displaying Record: 2 of 34

Displaying record: 2 of 2

Title:	Krause's food, nutrition, & diet therapy / - edited by L. Kathleen Mahan, Sylvia Escott-Stump.		
Edition:	10th ed.		
Publisher:	Philadelphia : W.B. Saunders, c2000.		
Description:	xxxiv, 1194 p. : ill. (some col.) ; 29 cm.		
Subject:	<u>Diet therapy</u> <u>Nutrition</u> <u>Food</u>		
Other Authors:	<u>Mahan, L. Kathleen.</u> <u>Escott-Stump, Sylvia.</u>		
Alternate Titles:	Food, nutrition, & diet therapy Krause's food, nutrition and diet therapy Food, nutrition, and diet therapy		
Contents:	Digestion, absorption, transport, and excretion of nutrients - Energy - Macronutrients: carbohydrates, proteins, and lipids - Vitamins - Minerals - Water, electrolytes, and acid-base balance - Nutrition during pregnancy and lactation - Nutrition in infancy - Nutrition for the low-birth-weight infant - Nutrition in childhood - Nutrition in adolescence - Nutrition in adult years - Nutrition in aging - Nutrition in the community - Guidelines for dietary planning - Dietary and clinical assessment - Laboratory data in nutrition assessment -Interactions between drugs and nutrients.		
ISBN:	0721679048		
Publication date:	c2000.		
Detailed Holding Information			
Collection	Call #	Copy	Note
General Book Collection, Level 3	RM216.M285 2000		
Detailed Circulation Information			
Status	Holdings	Hold Status	
Available		Not on hold	

FIGURE 2.2. Description of a book in an electronic book catalog.
 Reproduced with the permission of Woodward Library, Austin Peay State University.

- a book from 1979. During the search, however, she studied the entries for keywords, such as "food allergy" and "food habits." One entry, "diet therapy," caught her eye and yielded a reasonable list of thirty-four books, including two titles published in 2000 and six in 1999.
2. Examine the various entries in detail, starting with the most recent. Notice Figure 2.2, which reproduces the detailed description of the book. Under the description of the contents, the researcher can quickly determine if this book will serve well.
 3. Print the entry and use it for your trip into the stacks to find the book and to examine it for possible checkout. TIP: While in the stacks, examine nearby books, for they will likely treat the same subject.

HINT: The electronic catalog may provide a gateway or link to other libraries or to networked information, even to the Internet (see page 73 for more about hypertext links). The gateway enables you to examine the holdings in a nearby library or in distant libraries which offer interlibrary loans.

2f Using Compact Diskettes

Browsing in an encyclopedia on a CD will give you a good feel for the depth and strength of the subject and a list of likely topics. For general information, consult an encyclopedia on an individual disk, such as *Grolier's Encyclopedia*, *Encarta*, or *Electronic Classical Library*. For specific information, you might try the discipline-related CDs, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *IBM Dictionary of Computing*, *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Economies*, *The History of American Literature*, *America's Civil War: A Nation Divided*, *Leading Black Americans*, and others. Your library may not house the individual CD relevant to your search, so look for additional disks at department offices and at the offices of individual professors.

Figure 2.3 on the following page shows one page from the Encarta Encyclopedia 2000 with a notation to key words that might produce a research paper topic. This material can be found at <http://encarta.msn.com/index/conciseindex/13/0133e000htm?z=1&pg=2&br=1>

2g Using Printed Materials to Evaluate Your Potential Topic

With your working topic in hand, do some exploratory reading in reference books, biographies, or periodicals. This early reading will enhance your understanding of the topic, give you hints about refining it, and confirm that sufficient literature exists.

Scanning Periodicals and Books

As with Internet sources, look to see how your subject is discussed in the literature. Carefully read the *titles* of books and articles, noting any key terms:

- "The Lessons of the French Revolution"
- "Napoleon's Ambition and the Quest for Domination"
- "Perspectives: Napoleon's Relations with the Catholic Church"

These titles provide several key words and possible topics for a research paper: *Napoleon's ambition*, *Napoleon and the church*, *the French Revolution*.

Hughes, Langston (1902-1967), American writer, known for the use of jazz and black folk rhythms in his poetry. James Mercer Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and educated at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He published his first poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," in *Crisis* magazine in 1921 and studied at Columbia University from 1921-1922. He then lived for a time in Paris. After his return to the United States, he worked as a busboy in Washington, D.C. There, in 1925, his literary skills were discovered after he left three of his poems beside the plate of American poet Vachel Lindsay, who recognized Hughes's abilities and subsequently helped publicize Hughes's work.

Perhaps I
can use
this as
my topic

Hughes wrote in many genres, but he is best known for his poetry, in which he disregarded classical forms in favor of musical rhythms and the oral and improvisatory traditions of black culture. In the 1920s, when he lived in New York city, he was a prominent figure during the Harlem Renaissance and was referred to as the Poet Laureate of Harlem. His innovations in form and voice influenced many black writers. Hughes also wrote the drama *Mulatto* (1935), which was performed on Broadway 373 times. Beginning in the 1930s, Hughes was active in social and political causes, using his poetry as a vehicle for social protest. He traveled to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Haiti, and Japan, and he served as the Madrid correspondent for a Baltimore, Maryland newspaper during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

In the 1940s, first for the *Chicago Defender* and later for the *New York Post*, Hughes wrote a newspaper column in the voice of the character Simple (also called Jesse B. Semple), who expressed the thoughts of young black Americans. Simple's plain speech, humor, and use of dialect belied his wisdom and common sense. The character became famous and later figured in many of Hughes short stories.

Hughes wrote more than 50 books. His works include the poetry volumes *Weary Blues* (1926), *The Dream Keeper* (1932), *Shakespeare in Harlem* (1942), and *Fields of Wonder* (1947) and the short story collections *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), *Simple Speaks His Mind* (1950), *Simple Takes a Wife* (1953), and *Best of Simple* (1961). Hughes also wrote the novels *Not Without Laughter* (1930) and *Tambourines to Glory* (1958), the autobiographical books *The Big Sea* (1940) and *I Wonder as I Wander* (1957), and the children's books *Black Misery* (1969) and *The Sweet and Sour Animal Book* (written 1936, published 1994). *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* was published in 1994.

From Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2000. <http://encarta.msn.com> ©1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. "Hughes, Langston" is used with permission from Microsoft Corporation as made available through Encarta® Online.

FIGURE 2.3. "Langston Hughes" from Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2000. With highlighting and marginal note by the student.

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