

Writing a University Research Paper: Some simple guidelines.

I. Organization

The research paper generally takes one of two forms: analytical or narrative. The first sets up a problem or argument, then provides evidence to support whatever position you, the writer, have chosen to take to resolve or answer the argument. The narrative approach is usually a description of a topic based on facts and opinions presented as paraphrases and direct quotes from secondary sources. A high school book report usually takes the form of a narrative paper. An analytical paper is more appropriate for university courses. For example, when analyzing the work of two artists in a paper, consider exploring what can be learned about one by knowing about the other, rather than simply describing the career of one and then of the other and noting parallels.

Any paper follows a basic structure of an introduction, body or argument, and conclusion. The introduction should not exceed 2 or 3 paragraphs, in which you set out the scope of the problem you will examine, your procedure, and reasons for the project. In the body of the paper you present the argument methodically, supplying evidence in the form of examples and quotes where needed. The conclusion can either summarize your findings or open the problem up for further exploration while presenting some of your conclusions.

II. Citing Sources or References

In the course of writing your paper, you will naturally rely on the works of others to supply your evidence. This is not plagiarism unless you fail to acknowledge it specifically as to publication and page. Do not cite an entire work as the source of an impression or general theory. Whenever you use a piece of information that is not common knowledge and is drawn from an outside source, you must cite it in the form of an intratextual reference, footnote, or endnote. For the purposes of an art history paper, the format used by *The Art Bulletin* is considered to be standard.

A. Intratextual references

These are inserted immediately following the information drawn from the outside source, whether it be a quote, observation or information obtained through someone else's research. They include the author's name, date of work if you have more than one source by the same author, and page number within parentheses. The entire reference will be found in your bibliography.

Example: "Jack and Jill went up the hill." (Goose, 4)

B. Footnotes or Endnotes

The only difference between a footnote and endnote is where they appear in your paper. A footnote appears on the bottom of the same page as the reference. Endnotes are listed at the end of the document. The choice mostly depends on whether your software has a footnote function or if you have to keep track by hand, in which case the endnote system is easier.

All the following examples of footnotes or endnotes come from *Art Bulletin*.

Example: Single author text

1. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnographic Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA and London, 1988, 11

Please note punctuation and that page number is not preceded by 'p.' Or 'pp.' The title is either underlined or italicized, not bold-face or any other combination.

Example: Essay from an anthology

2. Russell Ferguson, "Invisible Center," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*_. Russell Ferguson et al., ed., New York, 1990, 9

Examples: Articles from Journal or Periodical

3. Anthony dePalma, "A Scholar Finds Huck Finn's Voice in Twain's Writing about a Black Youth," *New York Times*, July 7, 1992, l 6

4. David Craven, "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to 'American' Art," Oxford Art journal, XIV, no. 1, 1990, 44-65

5. George Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum," *The Nation*, June 16, 1926, repr. in Nathan Huggins, ed., *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*. New York, 1976, 309-12

Example: Essay from Exhibition Catalogue

6. Gerardo Mosquera, "Modernity and Africa: Wifredo Lam on his Island," in *Wifredo Lam*. exh. cat., Barcelona, 1993, 174

If you cite the same work immediately following the first citation:

7. Ibid.

If the second note follows immediately but has a different page number:

8. Ibid., 175

If you repeat a source later in the notes with other sources in between:

9. dePalma, 17

All footnotes are numbered successively. You do not repeat the number of the earlier citation.

III. Illustrations

You should include a photocopy of any work of art that you discuss in your paper. The proper form for this is to cut the photocopied image out and paste it onto another sheet of paper or to scan the image in by computer.

Under the image you should have the following information:

- the illustration or figure number that you have assigned it in the text
- artist's name,
- title underlined or italicized, not in quotation marks
- the date of the work.
- source of illustration. This resembles footnote form: author, title of publication, place of publication, date and page or plate number. If from a periodical, just follow that form.

This information can either be included in the text at the time you discuss the work (preferable) or be placed under the illustration or in a separate list of illustrations at the end of the paper.

IV. Bibliography

The bibliography is a list of all the works you have consulted for the writing of the paper, including those which were not cited in your footnotes. Please don't include those that you checked out of the library but didn't end up using because they didn't really relate to your topic, but your bibliography looks awfully short without them. Also, do not include texts assigned for the course in your bibliography.

Bibliographies are not numbered. They are always in alphabetical order by the author's last name. More than one entry by the same author is indicated by a line.

Examples of bibliographic form from *Art Bulletin*,

Bois, Y.-A., "Painting as Trauma," *Art in America*, LXXVI, no. 6

_____ 1992, "The Semiology of Cubism," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*. I. Zelansky, ed., New York, 169-208

Buci Glucksmann, C., "Catastrophic Utopia: The Feminine as Allegory of the Modern," in *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*. C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur, ed., Berkeley, 1987, 220-29

Daix, P., 1993, *Picasso: Life and Art*. H. o. Emmet, trans., New York

You can alternatively put the date of publication after the place of publication. The important thing is to be consistent. Choose a format and stick to it.

V. Editing, Proof Reading, Re-writing

Turning in a paper that is not carefully re-read and at least partially re-written is like marrying a blind date. In order to avoid this, start early and give yourself time to think about your subject in non-panic mode.

When you finish writing your first draft, go back and check your introduction. Often in the heat of discovery and writing, directions and intentions change—you may want to re-examine your initial ideas and change them slightly or even drastically. When you are further along but before you write your final draft, get a friend to read your paper for you—for missing words, for creative spelling, but more importantly for sense. This will get you out of the silly habit of writing for Academic Authority—a professor who knows more than you do--and into the good habit of making your ideas clear to people you talk to every day. If you don't have someone who can read for you, be sure to wait a day before proof reading your own paper. Mistakes are invisible to those who have just made them. Unless you happen to be a reincarnation of William Shakespeare, it is always a good idea to edit and re-write after you have thought about your first draft.

Here are some things to look out for in general, a starting place:

1. Watch for the difference between 'effect' and 'affect.' Generally if it's a verb you want 'affect', and 'effect' for a noun. Generally. If you're not sure, look it up in the dictionary.
2. Note well the difference between the contraction of 'it is'--*it's*--and the possessive pronoun *its*. The possessive pronoun has no apostrophe.
3. Avoid repeated words and terms. It may seem that "image" has no synonyms. It does. Another word that art-writers tend to overuse is 'influence.' Try to find a more precise word to describe what you mean.

Example: Degas's paintings were a big 'influence' on José Fulano.

Compare to: José Fulano used Degas's treatment of young ballerinas as the basis for his studies of salsa dancers.

4. Try to avoid the passive voice. This refers to the various forms of the verb 'to be.' You can almost always replace the phrases 'there is/are/was/were' with an active verb. Note differences between sentences such as:
 - a. She had been walking down the street with him for two hours while he was talking about guitar amplifiers.
 - b. She walked down the street with him for two hours while he talked about guitar amplifiers.

Or...

- a. There were twenty five paintings on the table.
- b. Twenty five paintings lay in a pile on the table.
- c. He had left twenty five paintings on the table.

5. Note the difference between single and double quotation marks

Single ones denote a word or phrase itself, not what it means. Example: I wrote about the verb 'to be.' Double quotation marks denote a quote or set off a phrase for its meaning. Example: He likes to play "good cop" to her "bad cop."

6. 'Feel' and 'believe' mean different things. A research paper is about what you believe. What you feel is your own business. What you believe and can convince other people to believe through a good argument is the point of writing a research paper.

7. If you refer to specific images, be sure to refer to them in detail. Looking at pictures closely is why you have taken this course.

8. Do not quote from dictionary or encyclopedia entries. At the university level, a wider experience of reading and the ability to synthesize our own thoughts is required.

9. Don't start a paper with the phrase, "Since the beginning of time" or, "Since the beginning of recorded history." You don't have time to finish such a paper.