

Specifically for us

The final aim for this research project is for you to increase your ability to reason logically, to argue coherently, and to write correctly. This paper can also serve as a foundation for your dissertation, should you wish.

Checklist Rubric

This is a checklist you can use to help ensure a good paper.

- Is there an underlying logic to how you present your paper? Every paper that has a point has an argument attempting to compel the reader to agree with that point.
- Have you defined the concepts central to your paper?
- Do you use headings to structure the paper for the reader? Do you provide transitions that also keep the reader aware of where he/she is in your paper/argument?
- Is your paper long enough to answer the research question, but not so long as to be boring?
- Do you use tables and graphs appropriately? Do your descriptive statistics give a view of the data? Do you refer to every table and figure in your writing? (If not, then you should not have included it.)
- Did you perform the necessary auxiliary tests and provide the test statistics, the test parameters, and the p-values?
- Did you use a sufficient number of sources/citations to help avoid bias in your results? Do you use academic sources? Are your sources reputable?
- Wikipedia is a nice place to get an idea, especially if you have no clue what you are writing about. However, it is an encyclopedia—a tertiary source. As such, it cannot be the final word on anything you need to cite. You need to find a more reputable source than a general reference source. Did you do so?
- Did you avoid general-purpose reference books? Did you cite and reference everything correctly?
- Do you provide necessary citations? Do you format your citations and references correctly?
- Grammar: Correct comma use: ____; Avoidance of colloquialisms: ____; Avoidance of contractions: ____; Proper verb tense given the grammatical situation: ____; General proper word use: ____.

Suggestions:

The following are some suggestions to help create a better final product. Of course these are not hard and fast rules, but they do tend to work as good guidelines. If you have no clue what to do, the best thing to do is to stop in and chat with me.

1. Pick an issue that interests you. Pick something you enjoy, since you are going to work on this for the entire semester—perhaps life.
2. Read, read, and read some more! Start with the general history of your issue and progress to the more specific. These histories should provide you with the vast majority of the facts that you need. Make sure you find several sources for your facts, as each source will tell a slightly different story.

Stuck on getting good sources? Look at the reference lists, as they serve as indicators of what sources and people are most important in your chosen topic.

3. The most important part in any research project is structure of the paper. Once that structure is created, everything else should flow. Of course, allow for that structure to change should the need arise. A research paper is an organic thing; it grows and changes with the level of knowledge you have.
4. Proofread your paper. Have someone else proofread it—your parents, your spouse, your boss, your golden retriever. Pay special attention to whether or not what you wrote *makes sense*. The reader does not care what you meant to write; only what you actually wrote.
5. The discipline deals severely with any instance of plagiarism. With that in mind, make sure you cite and reference your sources properly. If you define a word, that definition needs to be cited. If you use a fact that is not common knowledge, it needs to be cited. What is common knowledge? Ask your server at McDonalds. If he/she knows it, then it is common knowledge.
6. Common knowledge is frequently wrong.