

# *Writing Good Papers*

The techniques for writing good college papers are easy to follow. However, you should keep several important points in mind. First, be sure you understand the type of paper that is required of you. Second, narrow your subject. Third, organize the points you want to cover in your paper. Fourth, make sure you have a good ending or concluding passage to your paper that restates your reason for writing the paper or what you found in your research.

## **Kinds of Papers**

There are many kinds of papers that you may be asked to write during your college career. Below are descriptions of four common types of papers assigned to students.

**Reports:** Reports are usually brief discussions of scientific research results. The format of the paper is generally provided by the instructor.

**Themes:** These papers are usually not long (1-3 pages). They are based more on your own feelings, ideas, or personal experiences.

**Critical Essays:** These assignments require you to give an opinion about a book or some other type of writing. Essays are usually assigned in an English or other language course.

**Research Papers:** These kinds of papers are very common and can be of any length. However, they are usually at least four double-spaced typed pages based on broad library research of written material on a given subject. (These papers are generally very formal and should be written in third person.)

## **Narrowing Your Subject**

The most common criticism of papers by college professors is that the subject is too broad. A professor of English at Cornell University suggests putting your paper topic through three or four subject narrowings. Below is an example.

General Topic: World War II

1st Narrowing: The critical battles of World War II

2nd Narrowing: The battle at Normandy

3rd Narrowing: Hitler's strategy at Normandy

## **Organization of the Paper**

A good college paper should have the following:

1. A topic that is clearly stated.
2. The points in your paper should be developed beyond brief statements.
3. Support your main points with quotes from authorities or illustrations from examples.

Below is an organizational outline which may give you further direction in writing your paper.

1. Introduction: Use a pertinent quote or striking statement of some kind.
  1. States purpose.
  2. States what you intend to accomplish.
2. (Major Point #1) State clearly.
  1. Give examples and supporting evidence for major point #1.
3. (Major Point #2) Again state clearly.
  1. Give supporting examples and evidence for your second
  2. major point.
4. Repeat above two processes for additional major points.
5. Conclusion.
  1. Emphasizes reason(s) for paper, results of research
  2. (highlights) and reiteration of opinion(s).

### **Conclusion of Paper**

Don't ever leave your paper without a concluding statement. The reader will be left wondering what happened to the rest of the paper. The conclusion usually summarizes or restates the main point(s) described in the introduction of the paper. In your conclusion you can predict what may come in the future, give your opinion about something or draw a conclusion based on your research.

### **The First Draft**

The first draft is usually full of deletions, additions, notes, and arrows going in all directions which are only understandable to the writer. If you leave the paper in this state, much time will be lost trying to refigure out what you were trying to say. You should, therefore, make a good clear, understandable copy after your first draft is done. It will take a little more time initially but it will save you time in the long run, plus you will have a much easier time should you need to make revisions later.

### **The Title**

It is usually best to wait until after the paper is completed before giving it a title. It should be remembered that the title is not the subject of the paper but reflects the content of the subject. Try to choose a title that will attract the reader's attention so that he/she would want to read your paper.

Texas Woman's University Counseling Center, 2005.