

What do you do in your free time? It's easy to think of leisure as purely personal—you choose what you enjoy, what relaxes you, what makes you happy. Yet sociologists recognize that leisure is intensely social. Your leisure choices reveal and reinforce your social class position, expose you to specific cultural capital, and signal your identity to others. Whether you attend the opera or watch reality TV, go hiking or visit the mall, spend money on experiences or time with free activities—all of these choices are shaped by and reflect your class position. This assignment asks you to track your leisure time and analyze what it reveals about social inequality.

This exercise develops three essential sociological skills:

1. Recognizing leisure consumption as a social rather than purely individual practice
2. Analyzing how leisure preferences relate to social position and cultural capital
3. Connecting everyday leisure choices to broader patterns of distinction and inequality

## Assignment Overview

In this research application, you will document your leisure activities over 3-14 days (depending on your level), recording how you spend your free time, what activities cost money, what equipment or access is required, and whether activities are public or private, digital or analog, commodified or free. You'll create a detailed analysis table and explore how your leisure patterns reveal and reproduce your social class position. Through careful analysis, you'll examine how access to certain leisure activities depends on economic and cultural capital, and how your leisure habits connect to broader patterns of social inequality.

The specific requirements for what you need to do vary depending on what grade you would like to earn: Basic (75), Proficient (87), or Advanced (100). Students who come close but do not satisfactorily complete the requirements for a level will be allowed to revise and resubmit their application.

## Report Structure

Use the standard [research report template]. Below are the specific requirements for each section:

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**In your submission, clearly state which level you are attempting: “Basic,” “Proficient,” or “Advanced.”** You must complete all components of that level to earn the grade.

## Rubric: Assignment Components by Level

### Introduction: Project Overview

**All levels should:** - Define leisure as distinct from work (but related to it) - Reflect on your own social position and background: What class position do you occupy? How might this shape what you notice about leisure? - Present your research question(s): How do your leisure choices connect to social class? Which aspects will you focus on? - Explain how digitization, commodification, or public/private distinctions affect your leisure

### Methods: Data Collection Approach

**All levels should:** - Explain how you determined your own social class position and what it might mean for your research (This is reflexivity—how does who you are shape what you find?) - Describe the time period you tracked: - **Basic:** 3 days of leisure activities - **Proficient:** 7 days of leisure activities - **Advanced:** 14 days of leisure activities - List what you documented: date/time, activity, location (public/private?), duration, cost, materials/equipment needed, digital or analog, active or passive consumption - Explain your documentation method: Did you keep a diary, use photos, use a spreadsheet? - Note any patterns you looked for

**All levels must include:** - 4-6 photographs of your leisure spaces or activities with captions explaining what they show about your leisure choices - Your complete leisure diary (can be in appendix) showing all activities tracked

### Findings: Your Leisure Patterns and Social Class

**All levels must create:** - A table analyzing your leisure activities by: - Activity | Time Spent | Cost | Public/Private | Digital/Analog | Commodified/Non-commodified | Equipment Needed

**Basic (250 words minimum):** - Describe your overall leisure patterns: What do you do in your free time? - Analyze at least one of these dimensions: public vs. private leisure, digital vs. analog, or commodified vs. non-commodified - Note which leisure activities cost money and which are free - Identify at least one way your leisure choices relate to your social position - Connect to one course concept (bold it, e.g., **cultural capital**, **commodification**, **social class**)

**Proficient (400 words minimum):** - Describe your overall leisure patterns (frequency, duration, types of activities) - Analyze all three dimensions: - Public vs. private leisure spaces (use Sennett’s “decline of public life” thesis) - Digital vs. analog leisure activities (how has technology changed your leisure?) - Commodified vs. non-commodified leisure (which of your activities require payment/memberships/equipment?) - Discuss the materials and equipment required for your various leisure pursuits and what this reveals about access and class - Reflect on how much of your “free time” is truly leisure vs. household/family

obligations - Connect findings to one or more course concepts (bold them, e.g., **cultural capital, commodification, public life, social stratification**)

**Advanced (600 words minimum):** - Comprehensive analysis of all three leisure dimensions with examples - Analyze patterns across the 14-day tracking period: Are certain activities more frequent on certain days? Does leisure change based on work schedule? - Discuss how your social class position provides or constrains access to certain types of leisure - Examine how your leisure appears on social media as a potential status marker (**distinction**) - Reflect on how digitization affects your leisure choices and experiences - Identify which leisure activities serve to maintain or reproduce your social class position - Connect findings to two or more course concepts (bold them, e.g., **cultural capital, commodification of leisure, digital divide, social reproduction, distinction, consumption patterns**)

### **Conclusion: Theoretical Implications**

**All levels should:** - Reflect on how your leisure choices reflect and reinforce social class distinctions - Discuss the relationship between your work, leisure, and consumption patterns - Analyze how digitization transforms your leisure experiences - Connect back to broader sociological questions: What do your leisure patterns reveal about inequality in society? - Discuss limitations: How might your analysis differ if you were a different class position? What wouldn't you notice? What assumptions did you make?

**Advanced should add:** - Propose how Sennett's "decline of public life" thesis appears in your own leisure patterns - Discuss whether your leisure practices challenge or reinforce class hierarchies

### **Appendix: Supplementary Information**

**All levels should include:** - Your complete leisure diary/tracking data (dates, activities, times, costs, etc.) - Photographs of your leisure spaces/activities with captions - Your analysis table (Activity | Time Spent | Cost | Public/Private | Digital/Analog | Commodified/Non-commodified | Equipment Needed)

**Proficient/Advanced should add:** - Additional analysis or comparison across different days/contexts - Reflections on patterns you noticed during tracking

### **Potential Focus Areas**

- **Private vs. Public Leisure** - Examine Sennett's "decline of public life" thesis by tracking your home-based entertainment (streaming services, gaming) versus public leisure activities (concerts, dining out, sports attendance).
- **Commodification of Leisure** - Analyze your participation in transformed activities (hiking, swimming) that now require specialized equipment,

memberships, or entrance fees.

- **Digitally-Mediated Leisure** - Explore how digital technologies have transformed your leisure experiences from analog to digital, and how social class influences your access to digital leisure.
- **Leisure as Social Distinction** - Document how your leisure activities reflect your social class position and how these patterns connect to broader social boundaries and hierarchies.
- **Leisure Time Distribution** - Analyze how much of your available free time is truly "leisure" and how much is spent on household obligations, family care, or other forms of unpaid labor.

### Tips for Effective Research

- Be specific about both time and money you spend on leisure activities
- Document the material goods required for participation in your various leisure activities
- Consider how your leisure activities appear on social media as potential status markers
- Pay attention to the transition between work and leisure in your daily life
- Track both planned leisure (movies, sports events) and unplanned leisure (scrolling social media, napping)
- Distinguish between active participation and passive consumption in your leisure