

How to Write Good Research Papers

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(Continued)

What does clear writing mean?

- Your argument is obvious to the reader.
- The reader does not have to think hard to understand the "point" of your essay.
- It is easy for the reader to understand how your evidence supports your main argument.
- Your sentences are succinct and unambiguous in meaning.

Tips for writing clearly

- Avoid moral/emotional language (in academic writing)
 - Bad word examples: heinous, monster, barbarian, amazing, wonderful
- Avoid hyperbole

Tips for writing clearly

- Have excellent grammar
- Always make an argument
- Make sure the relationship between each sentence and each paragraph is clear
- Use writing frames...

Writing with "frames"

A frame is a general outline for your essay.

Basic writing frame

1. Paragraph 1: State thesis
2. Paragraph 2: Provide evidence
3. Paragraph 3: Restate thesis and conclude

Example

Paragraph 1: "The Haitian Revolution coincided with the French Revolution. However, the French Revolution was not the cause of the Haitian Revolution. In this essay, I explain why."

Paragraph 2: "There is no evidence that the slaves who revolted at the start of the Haitian Revolution were inspired by events in France. Since most slaves could not read, few were even aware of what was happening in France. Instead, they revolted primarily as a reaction against the harsh conditions of slavery."

Paragraph 3: "I have shown in this essay that the Haitian Revolution cannot be explained as a reaction to the French Revolution because the Haitian revolutionaries were not even aware of the French Revolution when they began their revolt."

Getting more sophisticated

- "Frontload" paragraphs: use at the beginning of an essay to acknowledge and then dismiss potential arguments against your thesis.

Example: "It is true that the French and Haitian revolutions began in the same period. This coincidence has led some historians to conclude that there must have been a link between the two revolutions. As I show below, however, there is no evidence to support such a link."

Getting more sophisticated

Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence. Follow the topic sentence with descriptive sentences. Conclude with a sentence that explains the point of the paragraph and leads into the next paragraph...

Example: "Slavery was an institution that had long caused unrest in the Caribbean, independent of events in Europe. A slave revolt had occurred in Jamaica in 1760. Another took place in Guyana in 1763. Against this backdrop, the beginnings of the Haitian Revolution appear to have been simply another in a long series of slave revolts that took place in the eighteenth-century Caribbean.

"However, what made the 1791 slave revolt in Saint-Domingue different was that the resident colonial power, France, was at that time distracted by affairs in its capital. The king's authority was under question. France was at war. These problems allowed the slave revolt in Saint-Domingue to proceed unopposed."

Return to group work

Working in the same group as you did at the start of last class, rewrite your group's writing sample to make it better