Research Paper Requirements

**Your MLA Handbook is an invaluable source for this research paper. (You purchased this handbook when you bought the literature book). It will show you how to create MLA citations, Works Cited entries, how to introduce quotes, how to format your paper, etc.**

**General Requirements:**

\*4-6 pages in length (not counting “Works Cited” page)

\*Standard class formatting (1” margin, 12pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced, etc.)

\*Use of a minimum of **four** sources

-at least one book (unless approved by me) (can be an e-book)

-at least one print article (may be electronic)

-at least one Database article  
\*DO NOT USE unreliable sites such as Wikipedia! One of the best ways to tell if a source is reliable is to see if it has a publisher. (This can usually be found at the bottom of the page where you see the copyright and year. All database sources are reliable so you don’t ever have to worry about checking anything from the database for accuracy

\*You must use in-text citations and the citations must match your Works Cited entries.

\*Works Cited page in MLA style 8th edition.

Keep all copies of:

-rough draft/peer evaluated drafts

-copies of all reference pages quoted or referenced

\*I will let you know if I need to see them.

\*\*I strongly recommend that you make an appointment with the writing center to have someone look over your paper**. You will receive 10 extra credit points if you do so. (If you go to the writing center, they will send me an e-mail letting me know you were there).**

**\*\*You must proofread three of your classmates’ rough drafts. If you proofread more than three, you may receive extra credit (as long as you offer valuable feedback). You may proofread an additional five papers (for a total of eight papers) to receive an additional five points per paper extra credit.**

**Format:**

\*Introduction (catch the reader’s attention and have a clear and concise thesis

statement)

\*Subject background on your topic

\*Both sides of your argument

\*Conclusion (tie up loose ends and leave the reader with a clear understanding

of your topic)

Part I: **Introduction**

1. Sell your subject: When you are writing formally you need to do something to make your reader *want* to read what you’ve written. The more interesting you can make your opening, the more your paper will stand out. Here are a few ideas:

-Impress your reader with some shocking figures. (Three out of four students cheat on tests, 65% of people have contemplated suicide, etc). Just be sure to support where you get your figures.

-Draw your reader in with a story. (Suzie was 13 when she had her first abortion…by 19 she had gone through two more).

-Tease around your topic, making the reader guess at what you’re referring to until you finally tell them. (What is responsible for more deaths in America than the prison system?)

2. Have a clear and concise thesis statement (last sentence of your opening paragraph).

Part II: **Background**

1. Clearly define your topic. This should get specific and leave no doubt in the mind of the reader as to what you are talking about. (For example, if your topic is *movie piracy*, you should define piracy, tell how it works, what it involves, etc.)
2. Tell why your topic is important. Give a brief but thorough history of your subject. Make sure to include key events in the history of your topic. (For example, with movie piracy, I would need to mention Napster and other file-sharing sites, that Rambo: First Blood, Part 2 is one of the most heavily pirated movies of all time and that The Passion of the Christ really opened eyes about movie piracy today because of the millions of copies found around the world).
3. Why is the issue controversial today? Explain why your topic is relevant. This is not opinionated but a clearly researched example of why the topic is still controversial and debatable in today’s society. (For example, with movie piracy, the number of DVDs being massed-produced with warnings about piracy escalates while studios are cutting availability of screeners from critics and the press. A good example is how Fox has almost complete eliminated advanced screeners of DVDs.)

Parts III & IV: **Both Sides of Your Topic**

To make an effective argument, you need to make your audience familiar with both sides of the topic you are about to discuss. In this section of your research paper you will present this information.

This section presents both sides of the ongoing debate about your subject. You should include a minimum of three points for each side; that’s three points that favor your side of the argument and three points that oppose your side. Be sure to support each point with evidence and information about that point. Don’t short the points of the opposing viewpoint just because you don’t agree with them. Part of making a good persuasive argument is showing the opposite side’s points and being ready to refute them. If you don’t include information that takes that into consideration, you come across as being uninformed. Make sure to explain how each point is significant as well--why is this important to the overall subject?

**Part V: Persuasive Argument**

This part of the paper is your chance to make your argument-to persuade the reader to think the way you do by explaining your case. This is the place for opinionated statements, although it needs to be more than just opinionated statements. You need to be able to back up what you are saying in order to make an effective argument.

Avoid “just ‘cause” syndrome. Your reader will not believe what you say “just ‘cause.” You need to show your stance is justified and supported-back up your statements with evidence. Don’t be afraid to refer back to previous parts of your paper. That’s part of the reason of giving a subject history and pros and cons-to give you something to build from when you make your case.

Like the previous sections, you need to include significance for each supporting point. How is each supporting point significant to your central argument? If you can’t show this, then your point is just “fluff” and does not need to be in your paper.

**Part VI: Conclusion**

Now you’ve reached the end of your paper. After all that time and effort making your argument, you don’t want to just end abruptly. Take a moment to recap what you’ve said with a final paragraph.

The final paragraph should be a summary of your thesis statement followed by the major points you’ve made throughout the paper. It should summarize your persuasive argument without starting any new ideas or introducing any new evidence. It should leave the reader with one last concentrated look at the case you are making. Don’t leave the reader hanging. Give them a feeling that this is the end of the paper and a summary of the argument(s) you’ve made. If you start to introduce new ideas or information, it feels like you are continuing your case, not summarizing and ending.

\*As I stated earlier, *A Pocket Style Manual* is an invaluable tool for research. There is a section on internal documentation, how to create a Works Cited Page, and a sample research paper in the MLA section. PLEASE USE IT SINCE THESE ARE THE STANDARDS IN WHICH YOU WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE!