

Paper Guidelines

Format:

In general, the paper should be a research paper, though some topics allow more creative styles. You should find a number of references, read them, and assimilate the information. Then you must write the paper in your own words. A research paper is not a book report on a single book, nor is it a strictly argumentative paper presenting your own ideas. If you want to do something unconventional, talk to us about your idea first.

The paper must be typed double-spaced about 5 pages long. We'll allow papers with 4 or 6 pages, but try to make every word meaningful. The paper must have a title and the pages must be numbered.

Research:

Acceptable sources include scholarly books, journals, and conference proceedings. More popular books written by scientists, magazines such as *Scientific American*, *Nature*, and *Science*, and textbooks for other classes are almost always acceptable as well. Newspapers, newsmagazines like *Time* or *Newsweek*, and books by people without credentials are less satisfactory and should usually be used to guide you to more reliable sources. You may reference the textbook for this class, but not as a major source. Information from the internet should be carefully evaluated: technical information on a space mission from a NASA site on the World Wide Web is certainly acceptable; but an anonymous opinion from a non-expert or a blog is certainly not.

References:

Any idea or fact that you have obtained from a source must be properly referenced to avoid plagiarism (see below). There are several acceptable ways to do this. One convenient method is to give the name of the author and the page number in parentheses, following the idea or fact. For example, you could write, "Venus is similar to Earth in many ways... (Evans, 73)," and include the full reference with author, title, publications, year of publication, etc. in the bibliography at the end.

Plagiarism and Collusion:

I take these issues seriously. Failure to follow the University rules on these matters will result in an F on the paper and may result in a referral to the Dean's office. I follow the guidelines adopted by the Division of Rhetoric and Composition, which I reproduce (with permission) below.

STATEMENT ON SCHOLASTIC RESPONSIBILITY

The writing you do in the Division of Rhetoric and Composition (DRC) courses must be your own. Passing off the work of others as your own can be either plagiarism or collusion. Both are scholastic offenses that the DRC will not tolerate. The definitions and descriptions below will help you know what acts constitute either violation.

Plagiarism

The General Information Catalog of the University of Texas at Austin defines plagiarism as follows:

the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own written work offered for credit (p. 173).

1. You commit plagiarism if you fail to acknowledge the sources of any information in your paper which is not either common knowledge or personal knowledge. Common knowledge includes facts, dates, events, information, and concepts that belong generally to the educated public. Even if you used a reference book to discover the dates of George Washington's presidency, for example, you would not have to acknowledge the source because those dates fall into the range of historical common knowledge. If you borrowed material that interpreted or commented on Washington's presidency, however, you would be expected to cite your source. You can acknowledge a source through in-text citations, attribution lines (for example, "Gloria Steinem observes in 'Erotica and Pornography'..."), footnotes, or other forms of documentation approved by your instructor.
2. You commit plagiarism if you fail to acknowledge direct quotation either by using quotation marks when quoting short passages or indentation when quoting longer passages. Without the quotation marks or indentation, a passage copied directly from a source might be considered plagiarized even if it were followed by an in-text citation or a footnote: the citation or footnote acknowledges that you have a source but it does not indicate that you have borrowed someone else's exact words. If you use the language of a source, word-for-word, you must use quotation marks or block indentation.
3. You commit plagiarism if you merely paraphrase the original words of your source. Some students think that they can avoid a charge of plagiarism by changing a few words in each sentence they copy, or by rearranging the shape of phrases or the order of sentences in a paragraph. This is not true. When you take notes, you must be careful to put ideas in your own words, or to use direct quotation when you are relying on phrases borrowed directly from a source.
4. You commit plagiarism if you borrow the ideas, examples, or structure of your source without acknowledging it. You can be guilty of plagiarism if you systematically borrow the ideas and organization of a source—even if the language of your piece is substantially original. A student who, for example, reports on a major news event by using exactly the same ideas in the same order as they appear in an article in *Time* or *Newsweek* might be accused of plagiarism.
5. You commit plagiarism if you take, buy or receive a paper written by someone else and present it as your own.
6. You commit plagiarism if you use one paper for two different courses, or re-use a paper previously submitted for credit, without the prior approval of the instructor or instructors.

If you want to use words, ideas, or the structure of a selection such as the passage below from *Harper's*, you may do so correctly in two ways.

Medical costs will bankrupt this country if they continue on their current trajectory. And there are no data to demonstrate that improved management techniques will solve the problem. "Managed care" and "managed competition" might save money in the short run (though the examples of some other managed industries—such as the utilities and airlines do not inspire confidence). But the bulk of the savings achieved by Health Maintenance Organizations has been achieved by cutting back on expensive, unprofitable facilities such as burn centers, neonatal-intensive-care units, emergency rooms and the like. In other words, HMOs conduct what amounts to a hidden form of health-care rationing confident that municipal and university hospitals are still around to pick up the slack (Gaylin 62).

Gaylin, Willard M.D. "Faulty Diagnosis: Why Clinton's Health-Care Plan Won't Cure What Ails Us." *Harper's* (Oct. 1993): 57-64.

1) You may quote from the passage directly, using appropriate citations and quotation marks or (when the quotation is lengthy) indentation. For example:

Willard Gaylin, a professor of psychiatry at Columbia Medical School, maintains that "medical costs will bankrupt this country if they continue on their current trajectory. And there are no data to demonstrate that improved management techniques will solve the problem" (62).

2) You may report the information in your own words, acknowledging Gaylin as your source and using an in-text citation to indicate the location of the passage:

Doctor Gaylin, for instance, does not believe that the improved management techniques proposed by the Clinton administration will solve the problem of rising medical costs, because the cost-cutting measures followed by HMOs under the current system will not be feasible when all Americans belong to such health collectives (62).

You may not simply change a few words or phrases and call the material your own, even if you acknowledge a source. The following passage based on Gaylin's original would be considered plagiarism—with or without an in-text citation or footnote:

Medical expenses will ruin America if we stay on our current path. There is no evidence that better management techniques will fix the trouble. "Managed care" may save some money today, but the way things are we will still pay for expensive, unprofitable care tomorrow.

You may not call the work your own if you change the language in the original passage but closely follow its organization, ideas and examples. Most instructors would consider the following passage too much like Gaylin's original to be considered acceptable as a student's work:

Our country will go broke if it follows on its current path. And there is no information that says we can get out of this mess through better management. HMOs are successful today because they leave the county and teaching hospitals to fund costly, unprofitable specialized care (Gaylin 62).

Collusion

The General information Catalog of the University of Texas at Austin defines collusion as follows:

the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered or credit, or collaboration with another person to commit a work offered for credit, or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic responsibility (p. 173).

1) You commit collusion if you allow someone else to write your papers. 2) You also commit collusion if you allow someone else to edit your papers. It is scholastically dishonest for students to employ tutors to correct, edit, or modify essays in any substantive fashion. The same reservations and restrictions apply, within reason, to any outside assistance you may receive from a parent, friend, roommate, or academic tutor. Any changes, deletions, rearrangements, additions or corrections made in your essays should represent your own work. If you want assistance in a course beyond that which your instructor can offer in class or in conference, you can use the DRC's Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) in the UGL or the Learning Skills Center (LSC) in Jester A332. Tutors at these facilities are trained to comment on essays and to offer advice without editing or rewriting papers.

Permissible Tutoring

Corrections made in your essays should be your own work. In other words, your readers can tell you the kinds of errors you make, but cannot correct them for you. On the next page is an example of the tutoring you may receive.

mm

sp
rep

cs/apos
do

The time has come for the University of Texas to adopt domestic partner legislation. Having argued about this issue in Austin, many colleges, such as Swarthmore, Stanford, and the University of Wisconsin offer life and health insurance to the romantic partners of there employees. The partners in domestic partnerships are gay, lesbian, or heterosexual; they have to live with someone employed by the colleges offering benefits. They also have to register with the colleges' personnel offices if they want benefits. The city of Austin already gives its employees these benefits, its time for the university to do the same.

Your paragraph has several grammatical errors. Also, some ideas repeat themselves.

Penalties

If you have any question or doubts for a given essay about the way you are employing sources or getting assistance in writing a paper, consult your instructor before handing it in. The penalties for plagiarism or collusion can be severe. In all demonstrable cases of either offense, the DRC recommends that its instructors fail the student for the entire course, not just for the paper. However the penalty in a given case is at the discretion of the individual instructor. Your instructor must discuss any charge of scholastic dishonesty directly with you, and may also refer you to the Director or Associate Director of the DRC. In most instances, a plagiarism or collusion case is resolved either between student and instructor, or between instructor, student, and Director or Associate Director. If it is not, a student does have a right to a hearing before a designated university official and a right to make an appeal to the Office of the Dean of Students.

SCHOLASTIC RESPONSIBILITY
AGREEMENT

I have read and understood all portions of the Statement on Scholastic Responsibility.

Name (printed)_____

Course & Unique Number_____

Instructor_____

Signature_____

Date_____

Paper “Tips”

Since the paper will be graded on style as well as content, you may find the following suggestions useful. On the general question of how to structure your paper, I favor the traditional structure: an introductory paragraph that states clearly what you are going to discuss; a well-organized discussion that follows the plan laid out in the introduction; and a conclusion that sums up the results of your research and presents your own thoughts on the subject. Dividing the paper into sections is usually a good idea. Other structures may be successful in the hands of a good writer, but they are more often formulae for disaster. Another troublesome point is the proper mix of reporting the results of your research and presenting your own opinions; some of each is necessary for a good paper, especially in the context of this course. Remember that you **must** relate the topic to the course in some way. For most topics, you will have to do this yourself, usually after you have presented the results of your research.

At more detailed levels, you should pay attention to the organization of each paragraph (start each paragraph with a topic sentence), your sentence structure, word choice, spelling, and punctuation. If you have your paper typed by someone else, it is your responsibility to proofread it and correct any typing mistakes. I will list below some common, but inexcusable, errors.

1. Incomplete sentences. Which both of these are. Each of these examples would be a serious mistake in an otherwise perfect paper.
2. Run-on sentences are also bad, these are also serious mistakes. You can save yourself by learning when to use semi-colons.
3. The use of slang or colloquialisms isn't appropriate and really pisses me off. Contractions don't belong in a formal paper. Writing is not the same as talking.
4. There is no excuse for misspelling words; use a dictionary.
5. Remembering that, in general, commas come in pairs to set off parenthetical comments, that they are used to separate a series of elements, and that they cannot, by themselves, connect two independent sentences will help you to avoid red ink. For a quick test, see if you can identify the subject and verb of the preceding sentence.
6. While we are on the proceeding subject, learn the difference between preceding and proceeding, effect and affect, most and almost, principle and principal, less and fewer, feel and believe, its and it's, and all the other commonly misused words (“hopefully” is a disaster waiting to happen).
7. Avoid the indefinite use of the word “this” to refer, for example, to a whole previous sentence or idea. This can be solved by starting this sentence with “this problem.”
8. “Avoid excessive use of direct quotations, unless you find the exact words very apt or striking. It is better to cast the thought into your own words.” (Evans 97)

More Tips for Papers

1. When writing on controversial subjects, avoid both of the following extreme approaches: first, a one-sided paper; second, a paper that only reports the opinions of others. A good middle ground is to present accurately and fairly both sides of the issue and then to end the paper with your own conclusion.
2. Avoid writing that sounds like advertising. The paper is supposed to be a research paper.
3. Avoid cliches and opening lines like, "Man has wondered about extraterrestrial life since he first gazed up in wonder at the stars." I've read so many of those that I just can't take anymore. Anyway, personifying the species as "Man" is both sexist and bad writing.