

Research Paper

Overview

Each Senior is required to type a 5 page (minimum), MLA Format Research Paper, on a subject that is related to the topic of their Senior Project. Students will receive direct instruction on the process of completing this component of Senior Project from their English teachers. Enclosed in this section of the manual are key due dates, support material, helpful hints, and the Senior Project Paper Rubric. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the contents of this section of the manual.

Key Due Dates & Grading

Your Senior Project Research Paper will be graded based on the Senior Project Research Paper Rubric, located on page 21 of this manual. Please make sure that you read through it to familiarize yourself with the required components of the assignment. If you need help understanding any part of the rubric, please see either your English or Advisory teacher.

- The **First Draft** of your research paper will be turned in to your English teacher in early October. This must follow all the requirements of the Senior Project Research Paper listed on the Formatting and Content Guidelines on page 18 of this manual, and on the Senior Project Research Paper Rubric.
 - NOTE: There are additional worksheets (Thesis Worksheet and Research Page) that directly support writing a solid research paper. These worksheets are located on pages 22-23 of this manual.
- The **Final Draft** of your research paper will be turned into your English teacher in early November. This paper will be worth approximately 10% of your English grade. Late papers can be marked down heavily based on teacher policy. The final draft of your research paper will be returned to you in early December.
 - **NOTE: If your final draft to your English teacher is scored Basic, Proficient, or Advanced, there is no need to submit your paper again. All Below Basic papers must be revised and resubmitted until they receive a score of Basic or better before they can be included in the Portfolio.**

Getting Help

After 4 years of instruction and practice, with the support of their English teacher in the fall semester most SVHS Seniors are able to write a research paper at a level of 'Basic' or higher. If you need assistance in writing or revising your research paper, use these resources:

- Your Advisory teacher, English teacher, or any other teacher

- SVHS Style Manual on the Senior Project and library web pages
- The SVHS Librarian & Library Staff
- Library/lunch Workshops
- Senior Project Coordinator
- Boys and Girls Club support sessions
- Community volunteers

The Sonoma Valley High Style Manual

Each Senior will receive a copy of the SVHS Style Manual in their English class. The SVHS Style Manual is a very valuable resource, which presents a step-by-step process for how to successfully write a Research Paper. The SVHS Style Manual is also available on the Senior Project webpage, which is located at <http://sonomavalleyhigh.org/seniorproject.html>

Formatting and Content Guidelines

Unless a student has a modification determined by the Senior Project Coordinator, these are the minimum requirements for the Research Paper:

Format:

An MLA formatted Research Paper is:

- 1 inch margins
- 12 point font size
- Times New Roman font
- Double spaced (in paragraphs and between paragraphs)
- Pages numbered top right, with last name first (page numbers on 1st page of body MLA acceptable)
- Parenthetical citations (sources cited in the body of the document, uses all sources from the works cited page)
- Works Cited Page (includes at least 5 sources, 3 must be from database)

Content:

- 5 – 10 pages long (this means your paper must be AT LEAST 5 FULL pages when formatted in correct MLA style)
- Thesis statement must be bolded.

Helpful Hints

Gathering Sources

Be sure to use a variety of sources when researching your topic. A minimum of five different sources is required. **Three sources MUST be found on a database, and at least three different TYPES of sources must be used within the minimum requirement.** Examples of different types include: books, reference books, Internet, video, interviews, periodicals, pamphlets/brochures. General information sites such as Dictionary.com, or Quotes.com do not count as one of

the three minimum. DO NOT cite Wikipedia (but do use it for background knowledge and great links to other sources!).

Thesis

A thesis statement declares what you believe and intend to prove in your paper. A good thesis statement makes it much easier to write a paper. It must be a point you can argue like a lawyer arguing a case. A statement of fact is impossible to argue. For example, stating that the Titanic sank in 1912 is not arguable and, therefore, is not a thesis statement. Stating that the Titanic sank due to a deadly combination of design and manufacturing flaws *can* be argued and would make a good thesis statement.

Parenthetical Documentation/Citation

This term is the academic way of saying that you are telling us where your facts are from using parentheses () in correct MLA format. Arguing your paper is like arguing a case in court and resources should be used like witnesses to support your argument. A lawyer would not stand up in front of a jury and declare himself or herself an expert in DNA, prescription drugs or any other technical aspect of a case. The jury simply would not trust him or her as an expert. You are in the same position. The person reading your paper is not going to trust you as an expert in the subject matter you are covering. Go out and find experts! Give them credit by putting their name (or whatever word appears first in the works cited) in the parentheses after you use their information. **Plagiarism occurs when people fail to give credit to the sources of their information. Deliberate Plagiarism will result in an automatic “F” on your Research Paper.**

Works Cited

This is where you list, in alphabetical order, the resources you used in your paper. You are giving credit to those people who helped you make your argument and you are giving the reader the information they need if they want to look at the information for themselves. Be careful to use high school appropriate resources. The Magic School Bus would not be a high school level resource, but most of the material in the library would qualify. Your librarians will help you check your entries for correct MLA format.