



## Research Papers

**This overview of research paper strategies focuses on research papers that use library resources.**

The research paper is a popular academic assignment. Forms of it are also used in various professional fields. Writing a research paper gives students the opportunity to think seriously about a particular issue. Building on the research of others, they have the opportunity to contribute their own research and insights to a particular question of interest to them. Doing so gives students practice in important academic skills such as:

- Formulating research questions
- Conducting research
- Managing time
- Organizing information into coherent ideas
- Substantiating arguments with research in the field
- Presenting insights about the research

The KU Writing Center's Writing Guides provide writers steps to follow when writing a research paper. Click on this link to view: <http://www.writing.ku.edu/~writing/guides/research.shtml>

### Two Major Types of Research Papers

**An argumentative research paper** consists of an introduction in which the writer clearly introduces the topic and informs the audience exactly which stance he intends to take; this stance is often identified as the thesis statement. An important goal of the argumentative research paper is persuasion, which means the topic chosen should be debatable or controversial. The student supports the thesis throughout the paper by means of primary and secondary sources, with the intent to persuade the audience that the interpretation of the situation is viable.

**An analytical research paper** often begins with a research question on which the writer has taken no position. It is an exercise in exploration and evaluation. The student's task is not to persuade the audience that his ideas are right while those of others are wrong. Instead, the writer's goal is to offer a critical interpretation of primary and secondary sources throughout the paper--sources that should, ultimately, buttress his particular analysis of the topic.

### Thesis Statements

It is typically not until the student is well along in the writing process that his thesis statement begins to take solid form. In fact, the thesis statement in an analytical paper is often more fluid than the thesis in an argumentative paper. This is a benefit of approaching the topic without a predetermined stance

### Instructor Expectations



The University of Kansas  
**KU Writing Center**  
Instructor Guides

---

Individual instructors may also vary in their expectations of a research paper. It is important that you construct the assignment clearly and specifically. Having the students turn in their work at various stages can help ensure they are on the right track.

Disciplines vary in their ways of conducting research, and these are reflected in the format and citation style of research papers. Click on this link to view sample papers in four major academic styles:

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/index.htm>



The University of Kansas  
**KU Writing Center**  
Instructor Guides

---

*Rev. 6/12*