

Organizing A Research Project

Designed by
Duke University's
Writing Studio

Announcement

This Power Point slide presentation is not designed to take the place of a group workshop, where you are given handouts and have an opportunity to work with your own writing. It does, however, provide an overview of the topic for those who haven't taken the workshop and a useful refresher for those who have.

Some Important Questions

- What should you accomplish in your research paper?

Some Important Questions

- What should you accomplish in your research paper?
- Should you identify an arguable issue?

Some Important Questions

- What should you accomplish in your research paper?
- Should you identify an arguable issue?
- Should you include a range of positions?

Some Important Questions

- What should you accomplish in your research paper?
- Should you identify an arguable issue?
- Should you include a range of positions?
- Why is your topic important?

Some Important Questions

- What should you accomplish in your research paper?
- Should you identify an arguable issue?
- Should you include a range of positions?
- Why is your topic important?
- How will your topic reflect the concerns of the course?

What concerns or issues are currently being discussed in the discipline?

- Read for background in general resources.

What concerns or issues are currently being discussed in the discipline?

- Read for background in general resources.
- Narrow your research to discipline-specific databases as needed.

What concerns or issues are currently being discussed in the discipline?

- Read for background in general resources.
- Narrow your research; for example, use discipline-specific databases.
- Identify a research topic.

What concerns or issues are currently being discussed in the discipline?

- Read for background in general resources.
- Narrow your research; for example, use discipline-specific databases.
- Identify a research topic.
- Frame a research question.

The Burkean Parlor

“Imagine you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar.”

“Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.”

— Kenneth Burke

Seven Strategies for Organizing a Research Project

1. Assemble Sources and Interact With Them

- Look widely but choose selectively.

1. Assemble Sources and Interact With Them

- Look widely but choose selectively.
- Select books, scholarly articles, government documents, and popular sources – according to your research question.

1. Assemble Sources and Interact With Them

- Look widely and choose selectively.
- Select books, scholarly articles, government documents, and popular sources – according to your research question.
- Skim the sources to evaluate whether or not they are on the point.

1. Assemble Sources and Interact With Them

- Look widely and choose selectively.
- Select books, scholarly articles, government documents, and popular sources – according to your research question.
- Skim the sources to evaluate whether or not they are on the point.
- Use bibliographies of articles and books to trace other sources.

2. Consider Other Methods of Gathering Data

- Explore other resources for gathering data – such as interviews, surveys, field work – in accordance with the conventions of the discipline.

2. Consider Other Methods of Gathering Data

- Explore other resources for gathering data – such as interviews, surveys, field work – in accordance with the conventions of the discipline.
- Use footnotes from sources to discover other sources and to follow the shape of the academic conversation.

3. Choose a System to Keep Track of Your Sources

- Consider double entry notes:
 - Divide each page into two columns.
 - Record your notes from a source on the left side.
 - Use the right side to record questions, to keep a running commentary.

3. Choose a System to Keep Track of Your Sources

- Consider double entry notes.
- Keep notes on separate index cards or pages of legal pad.

3. Choose a System to Keep Track of Your Sources

- Consider double entry notes.
- Keep notes on separate index cards.
- Use different colored inks for different categories.

3. Choose a System to Keep Track of Your Sources

- Consider double entry notes.
- Keep notes on separate index cards.
- Use different colored inks for different categories.
- Keep separate computer files.

3. Choose a System to Keep Track of Your Sources

Whatever system you use, respond to and evaluate your research material as you go along to ensure you will have something worthwhile to say about it.

4. Distinguish Among Paraphrase, Summary, and Quotation

- Paraphrase: Para means by the side of. A paraphrase restates all the original material in different words and is approximately the same length as the original.

4. Distinguish Among Paraphrase, Summary, and Quotation

- Paraphrase: Para means by the side of. A paraphrase restates all the original material in different words and is approximately the same length as the original.
- Summary: Gives an overview of the general ideas and is shorter than the original. It avoids specific examples and is more concise than the original.

“I think of paraphrasing as translation (Shakespearean English to Modern English...) and summarizing as condensation (or reduction) in one’s own words.”

_ Lady Falls Brown

4. Distinguish Among Paraphrase, Summary, and Quotation

- Paraphrase: Para means by the side of. A paraphrase restates all the original material in different words and is approximately the same length as the original.
- Summary: Gives an overview of the general ideas and is shorter than the original. It avoids specific examples and is more concise than the original.
- Quotation: Contains the exact words of your source and includes quotation marks.

5. Use Your Sources to Generate Ideas

- Write about what you read as you read it.

5. Use Your Sources to Generate Ideas

- Write about what you read as you read it.
- Identify and circle key terms.

5. Use Your Sources to Generate Ideas

- Write about what you read as you read it.
- Identify and circle key terms.
- Make a list of questions as you read.

5. Use Your Sources to Generate Ideas

- Write about what you read as you read it.
- Identify and circle key terms.
- Make a list of questions as you read.
- Look for connections, contradictions, and “silences” among the sources.

5. Use Your Sources to Generate Ideas

- Write about what you read as you read it.
- Identify and circle key terms.
- Make a list of questions as you read.
- Look for connections, contradictions, and “silences” among the sources.
- Determine your main idea(s).

6. Organize Your Ideas

- Use an outline, visual organizer, or highlighted parts of a “thinking draft” to reveal the bare bones of your argument.

6. Organize Your Ideas

- Use an outline, visual organizer, or highlighted parts of a “thinking draft” to reveal the bare bones of your argument.
- Take a few minutes to freewrite any parts that are proving difficult.

7. Evaluate Your Argument

- Try one of these exercises:
 - The main purpose of my essay on _____ is to explain/argue/explore/describe _____.

OR

- _____ is/does/contradicts(choose appropriate verb) _____ because _____.

7. Evaluate Your Argument

- Do you clearly state reasons that support the purpose you've stated?

7. Evaluate Your Argument

- Do you clearly state reasons that support the purpose you've stated?
- Do you consider counterarguments?

7. Evaluate Your Argument

- Do you clearly state reasons that support the purpose you've stated?
- Do you consider counterarguments?
- Do you provide definitions of key terms?

7. Evaluate Your Argument

- Do you clearly state reasons that support the purpose you've stated?
- Do you consider counterarguments?
- Do you provide definitions of key terms?
- Should you return to your sources for clarification or for support?

7. Evaluate Your Argument

“Real research loops back and forth, moving forward a step or two, going back while at the same time anticipating stages not yet begun, then moving forward again.”

— From The Craft of Research by Booth, Colomb, and Williams

Concluding Questions

- How does your research and the claims you've made matter?

Concluding Questions

- How does the research and the claims you've made matter?
- How can you conclude your project without simply reiterating your claims?

Resources

- On paraphrase and summary:

<http://writing.colostate.edu/references/sources/working/>

www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/Workshops/summariztips.htm

www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/Workshops/paraphrastips.htm.

- Source tracking systems:

1/31/05 Endnote (available for free from OIT), ProCite, 45
and Reference Manager

Other Resources

- Schedule regular Writing Studio appointments.
- Check “Resources for Writers” at <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio> for helpful links, particularly the “Guide to Library Research.”

Interested In A More In-Depth Experience?

To sign up for a workshop, go to “Schedule An Appointment” and “Workshop/Group Sign Up” on the Writing Studio’s website:
<http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/>