TEACHING THE

RESEARCH

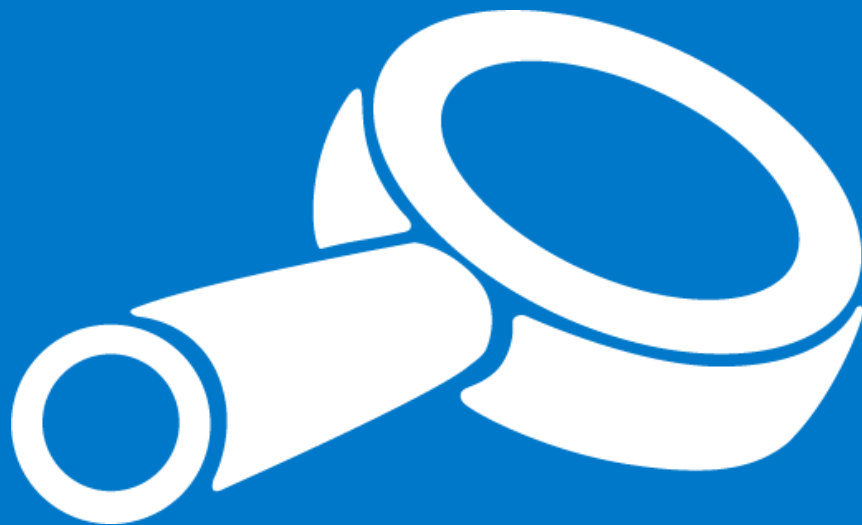# PAPER

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MESSAGE

Do your students struggle to write research papers?

If they do, you might feel overwhelmed by the prospect of having to teach your students *how* to write a research paper.

You might be thinking to yourself, "Maybe I just won't worry about this. Isn't this the English department's responsibility anyway?"

Well, actually no. It isn't.

We are all teachers of reading and writing. Even if our primary discipline is math or history, we are equally responsible for ensuring that our students can synthesize and convey their thoughts in a concise and reasoned manner.

In the pages that follow, you'll find a simple yet effective strategy for teaching research for the purpose of writing a research paper.

At the end of this guide, you'll find a link to a template that you'll wish you would of had when you were in school.

Thanks for reading,

Michael Macfadden

OVERVIEW

This guide consists of three primary sections:

1. **RESEARCH:** teach your students how to collect information so that it's most useful for when they actually start writing.

2. **ORGANIZE:** teach your students how to use their research notes to organize the main sections of their paper

3. **WRITE:** teach your students how to format

"If your students follow the steps in each section, their papers will nearly write themselves."

RESEARCH

Most high school students have never actually conducted real academic research. As such, it should come as no surprise that they lack an effective strategy for doing so.

The research portion of the research paper sets the foundation upon which student writing stands. This step is arguably the most important to get right.

Fortunately, the research process can be broken down into two simple steps

1.   **GATHER SOURCES**
2.   **SYNTHESIZE INFORMATION**

RESEARCH

1. GATHERING SOURCES:

As students browse the web, sift through primary sources, view videos, and otherwise find information, they should create a **"Source Card"** that features a proper citation for each resource that they've gathered information from.

These come in handy when writing the bibliography and composing in-text citations.

The example to the right features an APA citation for a website.

Singapore Overview. (2015, October). Retrieved November 25, 2015, from http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/singapore/overview

2. SYNTHESIZING INFORMATION:

For every piece of information that students find while conducting research, they should create a separate **"Information Card."**

As in the example to the right, these should contain a keyword at the top that summarizes the paraphrased information below. The text should be paraphrased to ensure that students don't inadvertently plagiarize.

Direct quotes should be placed in quotation marks.

Partnership/Infrastructure

On August 3rd, 1966, Singapore joined the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. From 1963-1975, Singapore received 14 loans from the World Bank which mostly went to support infrastructural improvements including water interconnection, port expansion, sewage, power, and telecommunications.

NOTES ON RESEARCH

QUANTITY:
Students should expect to create more information cards than they will use in their final paper. At this point, the student is simply gathering information. That they think might be useful. In general, students should expect to use 3-6 information cards per written page.

COLOR-CODING:
The source and information cards should be color-coded. In the example on the previous page, notice that both the source card and information card are the same color.

This helps students keep track of where their information came from when they start the writing process.

NUMBERING:
If color coating isn't an option (perhaps due to printing limitations), students may label their source cards with numbers in the top right corner and include a corresponding number on the information cards in the bottom right corner.

SUPPLIES:
This works well with actual notecards, but I recommend going digital and using the Google Slides Template that I built and have provided for you for free at the link below.

- **RESEARCH TEMPLATE: goo.gl/r3nAhn**

*consider each slide its own card and make your color-coded selection from the layout options.

WIKIPEDIA

USE WIKIPEDIA RESPONSIBLY:

Instead of putting a blanket ban on Wikipedia, teach your students how to use Wikipedia responsibly.

Since every fact entered into Wikipedia requires a proper citation, Wikipedia is a great place to find sources. If your students find something on Wikipedia, have them chase the reference to the original source.

In this way, teaching the research paper offers a valuable opportunity to teach your students to validate information. The image below features Wikipedia entry with an in-text citation and its corresponding reference.

It was said that Butler called his fiancée from training camp in Platteville, Wisconsin, and explained that "we're going to have to change the date of our wedding, because we're going to the Super Bowl and it's on January 26th."[1]

When he was released by the Bears after the 1995 season, he was the last remaining holdover from the Super Bowl XX team. Butler finished his 13 NFL seasons with 265 of 361 field goals (73%) and 413 of 426 extra point attempts, giving him 1,208 total points.

While playing for the Chicago Bears in 1985, Butler set a record for the most points scored by a player during his rookie season. His record of 144 points stood until 2014, when it was broken by place kicker Cody Parkey of the Philadelphia Eagles. Butler set his 1985 record by making 31 field goals and all of his 51 extra point attempts.

Career regular season statistics [edit]

Career high/best **bolded**

Regular season statistics	[show]

Personal [edit]

Kevin is married to Cathy Butler. They have three children together: Katie Scarlett (goes by Scarlett), Drew and Savannah Butler. Scarlett and Drew attend the University of Georgia; Savannah was a student at Marymount Manhattan and is a ballet dancer. Drew was the starting punter for the Bulldogs and lead the nation in punting with an average of 49.7 yards per punt and a net average of 44.5 yards per punt. In 2012 the Pittsburgh Steelers signed Drew as an undrafted free agent[2] and he currently plays for the Arizona Cardinals.

References [edit]

1. ^ ESPN Page 2 – Kluck: '85 Bears vs. '07 Patriots
2. ^ Drew Butler Signs with Pittsburgh Steelers as an Undrafted Free Agent

ORGANIZE

HERE'S WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS.
At this point your students should have a bunch of information cards with keywords at the top that quickly describe the content of the paraphrased research below.

If your students are using the provided template, print out the cards 6 per page in portrait view and cut them out.

Sort the cards by keyword. The organization of the cards will almost magically form the structure of your students' papers.

See the following page for a real life example.

ORGANIZE

REAL LIFE EXAMPLE:
I know this method works, because I use it myself. The image below features a picture of the organization process in action. I created these information cards for an economics class, as part of an MBA program, in which I had to analyze any country in the world from an economic perspective. I chose Singapore.
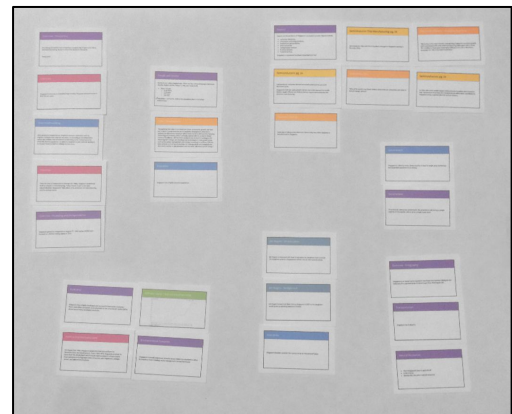
It may be hard to tell from the picture, but the keywords allowed me to quickly organize my research and layout the structure of the page.

I got an A on the paper... Just saying.

WHAT I LOVE:
What I love about this method is that since I paraphrased each information card, I had finished nearly half of the writing before I even started my first draft.

The writing process becomes more about stitching ideas together than it is about fabricating new thoughts. It's almost as if the paper writes itself.

RESOURCES:
While likely irrelevant in content, it might be helpful to view the actual cards from my paper. You may download them at the link below.

- **http://goo.gl/CzZch7**

"Your students will finish nearly half of their writing before even starting their first draft"

WRITE

CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENT WARNING!!!
I'm going to make the argument that your students don't actually struggle with writing. What they struggle with is everything that comes before writing.

If you can teach your students to follow the previous two steps, the final step of writing will seem like a breeze.

For this reason, the focus of this section will be on big picture thinking, formatting, and shortcuts.

WRITE

THE UNIVERSAL OUTLINE

During my undergraduate studies, a professor of mine told me to outline my lesson plans thusly :

- tell your students what you're going to tell them
- tell them
- and then tell them what you told them

KEEP IT SIMPLE

I think this outline is universally applicable any time someone is trying to teach something new to someone else. Keep it simple with your students and encourage them to fit the structure that they've identified in the previous step into this dead simple outline.

FORMAT

Most high schools require their students to compose their papers according to the style guide of the Modern Language Association. For your convenience, and for the convenience of your students, I've provided a cheat sheet on the next page that features the most common formatting issues that students encounter when writing in an MLA compliant manner.

If your school requires students to follow another style guide, introduce your students to Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (or OWL for short) at the link below:

- **https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/**

This website is a turnkey solution for your students' every need. You can find cheat sheets similar to the one on the next page for other guides as well.

"Your students don't struggle with writing. It's everything that comes before the writing that's hard"

Beth Catlin

Professor Elaine Basset

English 106

3 August 2009

Andrew Carnegie: The Father of Middle-Class America

For decades Americans couldn't help but love the red-headed, fun-loving

Annie. The story of the little girl moving so quickly from poverty to wealth provides the poor with hope and continues to be a dream of what the future just might hold. The rags-to-riches story is at the heart of the American Dream. And few other people have embodied this phenomenon as much as Andrew Carnegie did in the late 1800s and early 1900s. His example and industry caused him to become the father of middle-class America.

Andrew Carnegie can be looked to as an ideal example of a poor immigrant making his way up to become leader of the capitalist world. Carnegie was born into a poor working-class family in Scotland. According to the PBS documentary "The Richest Man in the World: Andrew Carnegie," the Industrial Revolution was difficult on Carnegie's father, causing him to lose his weaving business. The Carnegie family was much opposed to the idea of a privileged class, who gained their wealth simply by inheritance ("Richest"). This type of upbringing played a large role in Andrew Carnegie's destiny. In order to appease his mother's desire for material wealth, and perhaps in an effort to heal his father's wounds, Carnegie rejected poverty and cleaved to prosperity.

Carnegie's character was ideal for gaining wealth. His mother taught him to "look after the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves;" he later turned this proverb into a watch

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EASYBIB

EASYBIB

When I was a student, I dreaded writing my bibliography page. I could never remember how to format the thing. I always seemed to misplace my style guide, and it seemed to take almost as long to write the bibliography as the paper itself.

Not anymore.

EasyBib, at **http://easybib.com**, makes composing a bibliography super easy. Simply enter as much information as you have into their intuitive wizard, as in the image below:

EasyBib will take care of the hard part for you ensuring you don't leave out any pertinent information.

I used EasyBib when creating my source cards.

GOOGLE DOCS ADD ON

If you're a Google Apps for Education school, which you should be if you're not, EasyBib has created an excellent add on for Google Docs that works from within the application. Get it at the following link:

- **http://goo.gl/guUxvT**

RESOURCES

Note Card Template: goo.gl/r3nAhn

EasyBib: easybib.com/

EasyBib Google Doc Add on: goo.gl/guUxvT

Online Writing Lab: owl.english.purdue.edu/

My Singapore Research Cards: goo.gl/CzZch7

My Singapore Paper: goo.gl/MkqtDO

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