

LUC WRITING CENTER – “THE PURPOSE OF RESEARCH”

1) Specifics: Conducting research and writing it up as an essay represents another step in human thought on the subject under consideration. An excellent research essay gathers together all relevant information on a topic, such as facts, expert opinions, and previous studies, guaranteeing that your argument is logical and based in reality. In essence, this essay builds on previous ideas to make a well-crafted, comprehensive overview of preexisting scholarship. Instead of just summarizing another author’s ideas or plagiarizing the words of an academic peer-reviewed essay or any other piece of writing, an essay represents a new idea that is uniquely your own, providing new arguments, solutions, or perspectives on an issue or debate. Remember that if your argument is not based on carefully-conducted research, it would be foolish, even dangerous to implement your ideas. Research can improve our world by making our lives easier and preventing possible mistakes.

2) Sources: Before writing an excellent research essay, you should read peer-reviewed articles on the subject, carefully evaluating each article to see if it is helpful, informative, and adds a new piece of information that will support your own argument. There is no need to reference multiple articles citing the same information; simply give preference to the most recent one (i.e. an article from 2011 would be better than one from 1979 because it is supposedly more informed about contemporary theoretical or academic debates in your field). Once you have selected an appropriate number of sources, mention each author’s thoughts in one section of your essay, along with an in-text citation or footnote referencing the article. The full citation of each article should be located in your alphabetically listed Works Cited page.

3) Structure: Often, a research article has multiple sections under headings or “mini-titles,” which are descriptive sentences in bold or italicized centered font depending on your citation style. The number of sections will vary depending on page length. For example, a 10-25-page graduate paper should have at least 3 sections of equal length, each dealing with a different aspect of an issue. In a research essay presenting a possible solution to an issue others have debated, you could have 1) one section describing the problem and supporting your statements with solid, cited facts, 2) another section listing and citing the solutions other experts have advanced to solve the issue in studies, legislation, or publications, and explaining why they have been unsuccessful, and 3) a third section laying out your solution and supporting your ideas with facts. If you are writing a paper that is 8 pages or less, sections are unnecessary and can disturb or complicate the clear structure of your research essay.

4) Submit: Once you’ve written a specific, structured essay with cited sources, attempt the final “s” of this brief overview: submit. First, you’ll probably submit this paper to a professor for their corrections and advice. After your paper has been graded, you’ll usually receive it back with your professor’s comments. Don’t just throw away this paper. Save the computer file and print or digital paper for incorporating your professor’s suggestions into your revised essay and then submit it to a professional organization for publication (See the Loyola Owl’s [Undergraduate](#) or [Graduate-Level Professional Writing](#) page for conferences and journals that will accept your paper). If you’re unable to publish your essay yet, remember that blogs, newspapers, and other mediums of communication can be other ways to publish at least a summary of your essay and thus gain the attention of scholastic peers and experts. Get your ideas out there so that you can make a positive mark on the world (and build your CV at the same time)!