

How Do I Write an Abstract?

Academic Librarians' Perspectives on
Dispensing Qualitative and Topical
How-To Advice

Ruth Wallach
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, USA

Premise:

Academic librarians have an informational and/or disciplinary expertise to provide qualitative advice on:

- What kind of information is appropriate;
- How to evaluate and *contextualize* retrieved information
- *How to use information to produce research results*



Prada Saffiano Lux
Double Handle Mini
Satchel



Merona Mini
Satchel Handbag

Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper

Tags: citation, writing_support

The purpose of this guide is to provide advice on how to develop and organize a research paper in the social sciences.

Last Updated: Oct 2, 2014

URL: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide>

Print Guide

RSS Updates

Email Alerts

Purpose of Guide

Types of Research Designs

1. Choosing a Topic

2. Preparing to Write

3. The Abstract

4. The Introduction

5. The Literature Review

6. The Methodology

7. The Results

8. The Discussion

9. The Conclusion

10. Proofreading Your Paper

11. Citing Sources

Annotated Bibliography

Giving an Oral Presentation

Grading Someone Else's Paper

How to Manage Group Projects

Writing a Book Review

Writing a Field Report

Writing a Policy Memo

Writing a Research Proposal

Acknowledgements

Purpose of Guide

Print Page

Search: This Guide

This Guide Search

Purpose of Guide

This guide is intended to help you organize and write a quality research paper for any class in the social sciences. Also included are recommendations regarding how to manage specific course assignments. Note that, if you have specific questions about how to write a research paper, you should always seek advice from your professor before you begin. Specific requirements stated by your professor will always supersede instructions provided in these general guidelines.

Additional Help

USC Writing Center

Should you need personal assistance, be sure to make an appointment to meet with an experienced writer in the USC Writing Center to go over your paper. The Writing Center also conducts helpful, small-group workshops for students on a wide range of writing skills. Each week there are two or more different one-hour workshops offered at various times.

Political Science / International Relations Librarian



Dr. Robert V. Labaree

[Schedule Appointment](#)

Contact Info

Von KleinSmid Center Library for
International and Public Affairs
213-740-5824

[Send Email](#)

Links:

[Profile & Guides](#)

Subjects:

International Relations, Political
Science, Public Diplomacy

Powered by Springshare; All rights reserved. Report a tech support issue.
View this page in a format suitable for printers and screen-readers or mobile devices.

* Asterisk in guide title indicates core subject guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide advice on how to develop and organize a research paper in the social sciences.

Last Updated: Oct 2, 2014

URL: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide>

🖨️ [Print Guide](#)

📡 [RSS Updates](#)

✉️ [Email Alerts](#)

Purpose of Guide

Types of Research Designs ▾

1. Choosing a Topic ▾

2. Preparing to Write ▾

3. The Abstract ▾

4. The Introduction ▾

5. The Literature Review ▾

6. The Methodology ▾

7. The Results ▾

8. The Discussion ▾

9. The Conclusion ▾

10. Proofreading Your Paper ▾

11. Citing Sources ▾

Annotated Bibliography

Giving an Oral Presentation ▾

Grading Someone Else's Paper

How to Manage Group Projects

Writing a Book Review ▾

Writing a Field Report ▾

Writing a Policy Memo

Writing a Research Proposal

Acknowledgements

Purpose of Guide

🖨️ [Print Page](#)

Search:

▾

Se

- [Purpose of Guide](#) |
 [Types of Research Designs](#) |
 [1. Choosing a Topic](#) |
 [2. Preparing to Write](#) |
 [3. The Abstract](#) |
 [4. The Introduction](#) |
 [5. The Literature Review](#) |
 [6. The Methodology](#) |
 [7. The Results](#) |
 [8. The Discussion](#) |
 [9. The Conclusion](#) |
 [10. Proofreading Your Paper](#) |
 [11. Citing Sources](#) |
 [Annotated Bibliography](#) |
 [Giving an Oral Presentation](#) |
 [Grading Someone Else's Paper](#) |
 [How to Manage Group Projects](#) |
 [Writing a Book Review](#) |
 [Writing a Field Report](#) |
 [Writing a Policy Memo](#) |
 [Writing a Research Proposal](#) |
 [Acknowledgements](#)

Academic Writing Style

[Print Page](#)
Search:
[This Guide](#) | [Search](#)

Definition

Academic writing refers to a particular style of expression that scholars use to define the boundaries of their disciplines and their areas of expertise. Characteristics of academic writing include a formal tone, use of the third-person rather than first-person perspective (usually), a clear focus on the research problem under investigation, and precise word choice. Like the specialist languages adopted in other professions such as law, academic writing is designed to convey agreed meaning about complex ideas for a group of scholarly experts.

Academic Writing. Writing Center. Colorado Technical College.

Importance of Good Academic Writing

I. The Big Picture

Unlike fiction or journalistic writing, the overall structure of academic writing is formal and logical. It must be cohesive and possess a logical flow of ideas, which means that the various parts are connected to form a unified whole. There should be links between sentences and paragraphs so the reader is able to follow your argument.

II. The Tone

Throughout your paper, it is important that you present the arguments of others fairly and with an appropriate tone. When presenting a position or argument that you disagree with, describe this argument accurately and without loaded or biased language. In academic writing, the author is expected to investigate the research problem from an authoritative point of view. You should, therefore, confidently state the strengths of your arguments using language that is neutral, not confrontational or dismissive.

III. The Language

Clear use of language is essential in academic writing. Well-structured paragraphs and clear topic sentences enable a reader to follow your line of thinking without difficulty. Your language should be concise, formal, and express precisely what you want it to mean. Avoid vague expressions that are not specific and precise enough for the reader to derive exact meaning ["they," "we," "people," "the organization," etc.] abbreviations like "i.e." ["in other words"], "e.g." ["for example"], and contractions, such as, "don't," "isn't", etc.

IV. Academic Conventions

Citing sources in the body of your paper and providing a list of references are very important aspects of academic writing. It is essential to always acknowledge the source of any ideas, research findings, or data that you have used in your paper. To do otherwise is considered plagiarism.

V. Evidence-Based Arguments

Your assignments often ask you to express your own point of view on research problem you are discussing. However, what is valued in academic writing is that your opinions are based on a sound understanding of the pertinent body of knowledge and academic debates that are currently being debated in your discipline. You need to support your opinion with evidence from academic sources. It should be an objective position presented as a logical argument. The quality of your evidence will determine the strength of your argument. The challenge is to convince the reader of the validity of your opinion through a well-documented, coherent, and logically structured piece of writing.

VI. Thesis-Driven Analysis

The writing is "thesis-driven," meaning that the starting point is a particular perspective, idea, or "thesis" on the chosen research problem, such as, establishing, proving, or disproving solutions to the questions posed for the topic. In contrast, simply describing a topic without the research questions does not qualify as "academic writing."

VII. Complexity and Higher-Order Thinking

Writing Tip

Seek Help from the USC Writing Center!

The **Writing Center** is a consulting service that provides one-on-one consultations and small-group workshops to help students of all abilities improve their critical thinking and writing skills. If you are having problems writing your research papers, take advantage of this service! The Center is located in Taper Hall, room 321.

Another Writing Tip

Considering the Passive Voice in Academic Writing

In the English language, we are able to construct sentences in the following way:

1. "The policies of Congress caused the economic crisis."
2. "The economic crisis was caused by the policies of Congress."

The decision about which sentence to use is governed by whether you want to focus on "Congress" and what they did, or on "the economic crisis" and what caused it. This choice in focus is achieved with the use of either the active or the passive voice. When you want your readers to focus on the "doer" of an action, you can make the "doer" the subject of the sentence and use the active form of the verb. When you want readers to focus on the person, place, or thing affected by the action, or the action itself, you can make the effect or the action the subject of the sentence by using the passive form of the verb.

Often in academic writing, scholars don't want to focus on who is doing an

Interviews

- What kind of qualitative advice, if any, do librarians provide?
- Do librarians feel comfortable giving qualitative advice?
- Do librarians consider themselves an authority? Local or global?

Interviews conducted in early 2014 with librarian colleagues in:

Professional education:

- communication arts and journalism
- social work

Basic and applied sciences:

- chemistry
- computer sciences

Social sciences:

- American history
- political science and international relations

Themes

Librarian Qualifications

- **Chemistry:** undergraduate degree in chemistry.
- **Computer science:** scientists refer each other to other scientists, not to librarians.
- **Political Science/International Relations:** PhD in a social sciences field.
- **American studies:** no relevant disciplinary degree. Expertise based on experience. Being a generalist is important.
- **Communications and journalism:** knowledge and ability to appropriately communicate with the researcher.
- **Social work:** graduate degree in social sciences is useful; experience with info needs is paramount.

Role of Librarian within Research Process

- **Chemistry:** undergraduate students use librarian as path of least resistance. Graduate students need help finding specific resources that their institution does not have.
- **Computer Sciences:** Undergraduate students use Google; graduate studies are laboratory and product driven.
- **Political Science/International Relations:** undergraduate students use Google; graduates students need specialized resources and consult librarian. Students ask for help in specialized writing.
- **American studies:** undergraduates want digital information or change topic; graduate students need help with specialized writing and topic conception. All need help with understanding where information resides and in what format.
- **Communications and journalism:** coach, trainer, therapist.
- **Social work:** give advice on where information resides and in what format.

Proactive/Reactive

- **Chemistry:** reactive.
- **Computer Science:** reactive.
- **Political Science/International Relations:** both.
- **American studies:** both.
- **Communications and journalism:** both, try to be proactive.
- **Social work:** both, try to be proactive.

Local and Global Authority

- **Chemistry:** Very uncomfortable with stating something that is broadly available.
- **Computer Science:** Unsure.
- **Political Science/International Relations:** Public-ness is part of the philosophy of creating a library guide.
- **American Studies:** No difference between being local authority and global authority.
- **Communications and Journalism:** importance of global exchange of information.
- **Social work:** public-ness means something is findable and can reduce the number of basic questions.

Additionally

- *Social Sciences and Applied Social Sciences*: Librarians mediate badly or rigidly designed research assignments
- *Sciences and Applied Sciences*: Librarians' function is to ensure that students know how to get to the correct resource.
- Undergraduate students generally don't want to do the legwork of research; graduate students are often more willing.

Organizing Research for Arts and Humanities Papers and Theses

Last Updated: Sep 30, 2014 | URL: http://libguides.usc.edu/ah_writing | [Print Guide](#) | [RSS Updates](#) | [Email Alerts](#)

- General Guide Information
- Developing a Topic
- What are Primary and Secondary Sources
- What are Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Sources
- Writing an Abstract
- Writing Academic Book Reviews
- Writing A Literature Review
- Using Images

General Guide Information [Comments\(0\)](#) [Print Page](#)

Search:

The Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information on some elements that go into researching and writing arts and humanities papers and theses. Because there is no unified structure to research and methodology in the arts and in the humanities, this guide provides general norms and suggestions, but is not comprehensive. Requirements and advice given to you by your faculty and/or committee members takes precedent and supersedes recommendations and instructions provided in this guide.

Help with the Writing Process:

If you need help with the process of writing, such as composition, grammar, or syntax, please consult with the USC Writing Center. The Center offers a variety of assistance to help students at any stage of the writing process.

Librarian



Ruth Wallach

Contact Info