

Introduction

Welcome to the Manchester Township School District Research Process Guide. This guide was created to assist in the research process. It contains the necessary information and helpful hints which will aid in the research process and creating a successful research paper. The research process follows the MLA format standards. It is mandatory that every Manchester Township School District student complete the research process, which will assist with the eventual creation of a research-based paper as the student matures.

Definition of a research (according to Webster's Dictionary)

Research: NOUN: 1. a detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding.

Definition of a research paper

The research paper is a documented prose work resulting from extensive research and analysis of a topic. "Documented" means that the source of borrowed material is credited and that the materials consulted in preparation are listed. The research paper is not a report that simply summarizes information found on a topic. The main purpose is to use the gathered information to support and prove the thesis statement of the paper. The researcher's role is to gather information from reliable sources such as books, academic criticisms, periodicals, and electronic resources. It is critical that the researcher documents all sources in order to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism

According to Webster's dictionary, to plagiarize is "to steal and pass off as one's own the ideas, words and works of another." It is then the researcher's responsibility to:

1. Use quotation marks when copying word-for-word from a source. These quotations should be used sparingly, never to excess!
2. Document, with in-text citations, all information directly quoted, summarized, and paraphrased, to avoid the theft of another's ideas.

*According to the *MLA Handbook*, "Plagiarism involves two kinds of wrongs. Using another person's ideas, information or expressions without acknowledging that person's work constitutes intellectual theft. Passing off another person's ideas, information or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud" (52).

The following is an excerpt from Lester's *Writing Research Papers*, 1996. It gives an example of how to avoid plagiarism. The first paragraph is the original material as stated by Lester, the following paragraphs offer an acceptable and unacceptable paraphrasing of the material.

Original Material:

This time the speaker is "startled" in reaction to the Raven's answer because the speaker thinks it makes sense. Still using his reaction rather than his emotions, the speaker rationalizes that the bird knows only this one word and has learned it by living with a person who himself used the word repeatedly in response to his own bad luck. With this explanation, the speaker feels amused, and he settles down on a comfortable chair to contemplate the Raven.

Unacceptable Student Version:

The speaker is surprised by the Raven's response because it makes sense. Still using his reaction rather than his emotions, the speaker realizes that the bird knows only this one word and has learned it by living with a person who constantly used this word in response to his own bad luck. The speaker is now amused and sits back to study the Raven.

Acceptable Student Version:

The speaker, at this point, is shocked and amused by the fact that the Raven responds to him with the words “Nevermore.” Still relying on the firm grasp that he holds on reality, the speaker realizes that this is the only word that the bird can utter. He now sits back to contemplate the awkward, surreal image (“Raven” 204).

*The unacceptable version is not cited and contains too many similarities and strings of words as the original.

In the *MLA Handbook*, it sums up the finer points of plagiarism. Use this checklist to review plagiarism and how to avoid it. The MLA states:

You have plagiarized if

- you took notes that did not distinguish summary and paraphrase from quotation and then you presented wording from the notes as if it were all your own.
- while browsing the Web, you copied text and pasted it into your paper without quotation marks or without citing the source.
- you repeated or paraphrased someone’s wording without acknowledgment.
- you took someone’s unique or particularly apt phrase without acknowledgment.
- you paraphrased someone’s argument or presented someone’s line of thought without acknowledgment.
- you bought or otherwise acquired a research paper and handed in part or all of it as your own.

You can avoid plagiarism by

- making a list of the writers and viewpoints you discovered in your research and using this list to double-check the presentation of material in your paper.
- keeping the following three categories distinct in your notes: your ideas, your summaries of others’ material, and exact wording you copy.
- identifying the sources of all material you borrow—exact wording, paraphrases, ideas, arguments, and facts.
- checking with your instructor when you are uncertain about your use of sources. (60-61)