

I-Search Paper

For this final project, you will be researching and writing an I-Search paper, a personal investigation of a topic of your choice. In traditional research papers, most of the investigation takes place in the library where the writer is engaged in doing secondary research, reading second hand what someone else discovered; in the I-Search paper, however, most of your research comes from primary research – sources you will personally observe and interview. This assignment requires you to be a reporter – you will have to get out into the community and talk to people you do not know. The most important thing is that you write about a topic that interests you, a topic that will inspire you to explore a variety of sources to get your story.

GRAMMAR POINTS:

- 1.) Use reporting verbs that we have learned and practiced (e.g. state, claim, illustrate, substantiate, etc.)
- 2.) Use specific academic vocabulary and collocations we have learned throughout the semester.
- 3.) Correctly use a variety of sentence types (compound, complex, etc.)
- 4.) Correctly use advanced punctuation (e.g. semi-colons, colons and dashes) that we have learned throughout the semester.
- 5.) Use your grammar error log to self-check your grammar focal points (e.g. subject-verb agreement, relative clauses, verb forms, etc.)

Requirements of this **2000-3000-word (8-12 page)** essay:

1. Properly formatted title page (426 in PS)
2. A formal outline (427 in PS)
3. *The Lead*: Introduce your topic by explaining how you became interested in your search. Tell your reader what you hope to uncover in your investigation. (Narrative)
4. *The Body*:
 - a. **The Site Visit**: Visit at least one place of activity that relates to your search. Observe and record the actions and details of the environment in descriptive writing.
 - b. **The Interviews**: Interview at least two people (perhaps one person on your site visit) associated with your topic. Observe and record the actions and details of the interviewee as well as report the information gained.
 - c. **The Secondary Research**: Read outside literature on your topic and incorporate some of this information in the body of your paper. 20 note cards are required.
 - You will need at least 6 total sources, at least two primary (interview) sources, and four secondary sources.
5. *The Conclusion*: Conclude the I-Search with a reflection of your findings. What did you discover about your search? What was the most difficult part of your search? The most surprising? The most interesting?
6. *The Works Cited*: Include a works cited page listing both the primary and secondary sources you used in your I-Search.
7. Maintain a pocket folder with documentation for each phase of your search (diary, notes, drafts, downloads, everything!)
8. Present your findings to the class in a 5-10-minute engaging, *formal presentation* (with visual).

Two important reminders:

- ✓ Get out and explore. Network. Use your community as a resource for exploring your topic. Talk to teachers, librarians, family, friends, and neighbors. Find out how they would research your topic – you will be surprised with how many helpful suggestions people will have for you. Follow up on them.
- ✓ Do not throw anything away. I will expect to see careful documentation of each phase of your research. Keep track of all interviews, conversations, visits, and secondary research. I expect to see all of your notes neatly organized in a pocket folder, as well as a diary of the process.

Grade: The essay itself is worth 300 points. Additional points are awarded for meeting deadlines. If you miss a deadline you will not receive full credit for that particular assignment. It is vital that you meet the deadlines in order to keep yourself on track so I can have sufficient time to give you feedback on your work.

Possible areas of inquiry:

Contemporary Issues (homelessness, anorexia, substance abuse, abortion, aging, media addiction, medical research)

Trends (home schooling, virtual reality, increase in AP offerings, college acceptance requirements)

Search for values, beliefs, identity (What does it mean to be Asian-American, or a twin, or a vegetarian? What is my own cultural heritage?)

Curiosities (mummies, modern art, historical periods, Gold Rush, any natural history topic, life in another culture, another time period, astronomy, architecture, any history of _____, famous person, how/why did something happen)

I-Search Interview

This 500-600 word typed and edited paper (grammar and spell checked) reports the results of your interviews. Staple your list of questions as well as the notes you took during the interview to the back of the paper.

The interview write-up should include:

- ✓ Brief character sketch
- ✓ Brief scene construction
- ✓ Background of interviewee (establish ethos)
- ✓ Knowledge gained from this segment of the search
- ✓ Reflection

Interviewing

1. Do background research
2. Listen in a non-judgmental way
3. Paraphrase the interviewee's comments to make sure you understand. Ask for clarification
4. Be prepared. Have questions ready. Make an appointment. Dress properly. Look subject in the eye. Take pen and paper with you.
5. Interview in his or her environment
6. Use open ended questions. Avoid simple, closed yes/no questions. Avoid negative questions
7. Listen
8. When you finish, go over your notes. Make sure you understand your notes. Verify all data!
9. Types of questions
 - a. Openers/ice breakers
 - b. Routine factual questions – 5 w's and h
 - c. Numerically defining questions – stats, etc.
 - d. Conceptually defining questions – Why?
 - e. Probes – ask to explain, or elaborate
10. Note taking
 - a. Record specific data such as dates, names, spellings, any specific figures
 - b. Note major points and documentation
 - c. Review as soon as possible after interview to fill in gaps while memory is fresh

I-Search Site Visit

This 500-600 word typed and edited write-up will include what you see (description) and what you do (narration) during your site visit. Staple your notes of the visit to the back of the draft.

The description portion is best arranged spatially; take the reader on a tour (imagine holding a camcorder and panning the scene). Often a paragraph per unit of space works. Description will also include

impressions. Describe those details that help establish a dominant impression of your locale. Do not limit yourself to sight; sounds and smells may also permeate your site.

The narration portion is best arranged temporally, the natural sequence of what happens. Your challenge is to combine the spatial and temporal components of your visit into one coherent whole, which produces a dominant impression. It will help to brainstorm a word or two that defines your impression before you begin writing.

The site visit write-up should include (in addition to the descriptive and narrative portions):

- ✓ Location of site
- ✓ Knowledge gained from this segment of the search
- ✓ Reflection

I-Search Reflection

This will be your conclusion, a personal narrative

One of the most important parts of your I-Search paper will be the section in which you reflect on what you have learned while writing your paper. Consider the questions below as you write your reflection. Use them as a brainstorming activity. Do not merely string the questions together into paragraph form.

What did you learn?

What did you learn that you didn't expect?

What did you learn about yourself? About life? About people?

How do you feel differently about your topic? Your question?

What did you do that you did not expect? How do you feel about that?

What was easy? Hard? Why?

What did you learn from the problems you encountered?

What did you learn about writing?

What did you discover about "book learning" compared to "real world" learning?

What surprised you about your interviews?

What did you learn about taking risks?

How is your paper related to your academic studies in school?

What did you learn about the importance of what and how you have learned in school?

What comments have you had from others?

How would you approach your paper differently, knowing what you know now?

Due Dates:

You will receive 20 points if you have the required writing on time. You will receive 10 points if you have it the following day. No credit anytime thereafter.

If you are absent on the process due date you are expected to email me the paper the day it is due, or you will not receive full credit, even if the absence is excused.

Scheduling interviews and visits with ample time to meet the due dates is a challenge. Do not procrastinate. Your inability or tardiness to schedule in a time for the due dates will result in lost points. Organization and time management are fundamental aspects of this assignment.

THE FINAL DUE DATE IS FIRM. THE CLASS POLICY APPLIES TO THIS MAJOR PAPER