

Writing the Rough Draft

Before you can begin to write the rough draft of your research paper, you must correct and revise your thesis and outline, moving them one step closer to their final forms. You can still make changes even after this point, but you should be refining them to the best possible version.

Getting ready to start Gather your note cards and organize them according to the outline divisions (where you think your information and quotations fit best). Using your outline to guide you, begin to write your paper. Your paper will have five or six paragraphs: one of introduction; three or four in the body that explain, support, and develop the idea presented in your thesis statement; and one of conclusion. Remember, you should have a new paragraph for each Roman numeral on your outline, and you need to use transitions between your ideas—do not just jump from topic to topic, or you will confuse and frustrate your reader.

Some reminders Write your entire essay in the **third person**—do not use I, me, my, or you. Use the information on your note cards as you write, and **paraphrase** it unless you feel it should be one of your **two quotations**. Remember to follow this information with appropriate **documentation** at the end of the sentence. **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!!!** If you use words directly from a source, you **MUST** put that information within quotation marks and document the source. Even if you put someone else's ideas in your own words, you must still document the source unless the information is considered common knowledge or general information. Always insert documentation in the body of the text. You can polish the format later (see the documentation handout).

Number your note cards—again Make sure you **number your note cards as you use them**. Place a large #1 in the lower right hand corner of the first note card that you use in your essay, a #2 on the second, and so on (don't confuse this with the source number you put in the upper right corner). When you finish your paper, put the cards in order and secure them with a paper clip or rubber band.

Paper format Remember to number each page of your paper. Your last name and page number should appear in the top right corner of every page of your essay. Also, remember to follow MLA formatting for spacing, heading, dates, and margins. Use the sample paper I provided you as a guide.

Introduction As you write, keep in mind that the first paragraph of your essay will be your introduction, so you need to give general information about your topic in an interesting manner. State your topic, get your reader's attention, give some idea of your paper's development or organization (from your outline), and lead smoothly into the thesis statement. **YOUR THESIS STATEMENT SHOULD BE THE LAST SENTENCE IN THE OPENING PARAGRAPH AND SHOULD BE WORDED EXACTLY AS IT IS ON YOUR OUTLINE.**

Body Paragraphs The subsequent paragraphs explain and support the thesis. Begin each body paragraph with a topic sentence that clearly relates back to your thesis. Your topic sentence should not have documentation at the end of it; it simply sets up the topic of the paragraph in your own words. You will probably even have transition sentences between ideas in a paragraph

that are not documented. You only document information that you are using from the research to support the idea you presented in your topic sentence. Topic sentences, transition sentences, and explanations are sentences that you provide to put your research in context. Paraphrase most information, but only include direct quotations where they will be most effective. For this assignment, you should have **no more than two direct quotations in your entire paper.**

Conclusion The last paragraph is the conclusion. It should be relatively short and should not only summarize your paper without repeating the first paragraph, but should also demonstrate the validity of your thesis.

Revising the Rough Draft

Once you have written the rough draft, you need to make your revisions. Do not try to write the final draft of the paper yet—just write in your changes.

Read the introduction to make sure it gives the reader some background information on your topic and includes the thesis as the last sentence.

Read the body to make sure everything you present relates to your thesis. It must make sense!!! Cross out material that you find irrelevant.

Read through your conclusion and make sure that NO material is introduced that you have not already mentioned and that you give a *very* brief summary of your evidence and important points.

Read through for grammatical errors. Check for the following:

- Subject/verb agreement
- Present tense: everything you say about what *happens* in the movie or what choices the director *makes* or what a critic *says*, etc. must be in **present tense**.
- Run-ons or fragments (no starting a sentence with **but, and, so**—be careful with **because, if, what, and when**)
- Misspelled words
- Punctuation: check your comma usage—for example, no comma before **because** in a sentence. If you have a question, check with me or your grammar book.
- Remember to use quotation marks correctly, and to underline the titles of movies, books, and magazines while putting the titles of articles in quotation marks.

Read through the paper one last time to make sure each paragraph has a connection to its topic sentence. Reading it aloud is especially helpful. Be sure there are transitions from idea to idea.

Finally, ask a friend or parent to read the paper and offer suggestions. You do not need this second reader to rewrite or proof in great detail; however, this reader should be able to offer general impressions of the paper's logical order and presentation of the topic.