# Advanced Reading and Writing Research Paper Information

* How long? 3-5 pages (900-1250 words)
* What should I write about? Your choice of topic, but needs to be argumentative.
* How many sources? 4+ academically acceptable sources, at least 2 peer-reviewed, to get a top score
* What type of format? MLA format
* What are the parts?
  + Introduction ¶
  + At least 5 body ¶s (at least 2 of the 5 are concession/counterargument)
  + Conclusion ¶
  + Works Cited page
* What kinds of evidence? Mostly text evidence, OK to have some personal evidence, especially in intro/conclusion
* How should I include text evidence? quotes and paraphrases from sources with reporting words to show who said what using MLA in-text citations
* How do I submit? Canvas assignments:
  + Annotated bibliography, outline, and 1st draft: classmates will peer-review
  + 2nd draft: teacher will provide general feedback and provisional rubric scoring
  + Final draft: teacher will score on the English 1A rubric (raw score will be adjusted +10 points for your grade in this class)

## A successful research paper will

* Be 3-5 pages (**900-1250 words**). Not too short, not too long. A little flexibility on the long end, but more than six pages and the readers get tired.
* Have a clever/imaginative **title** that reflects the contents. Titles are customarily a sentence fragment or question, but might be a complete sentence.
* Have a well-developed **introduction**, with a strong hook, background/context, and a clear, specific, concise **thesis statement** that states the overall argument of your essay.
* Support the thesis with several **body** **paragraphs** with strong **topic sentences** and **analyses of text evidence** (context + evidence + citation + explanation).
* Connect body paragraphs with **cohesion strategies** (signal/transition expressions, synonyms, etc.) that show the relationship of ideas beyond a list (~~first, second, finally~~)
* Include **more than one** **concession or refutation** that explains what opponents of your position say, exceptions, limitations, etc., or inherency (why your plan is not already being done already if it’s so great), and clearly responds in ways that strengthen your argument.
* Have a **conclusion** that leaves your readers thinking or ready to take action.
* Paraphrase/quote and cite at least **4 academically acceptable sources** (2 of which must be peer-reviewed).
* Use proper MLA citation (both **in-text citation** and a **Works Cited** page at the end).
* Be carefully **edited** (by you) for proofreading errors.

## What should I write about?

**Please choose a topic that interests you, and that you can write an argumentative thesis about.**

An argumentative thesis = someone might disagree, and you can support your opinion with evidence:

facts, events, statistics, expert opinion, etc., from academically acceptable sources. Deeply held moral beliefs and judgments (X is wrong or bad) are hard to argue about/support with evidence. Arguments that rely on prejudice are not academically acceptable.

Start by looking up a topic in the library databases, see what other writers have said about it, and come up with your own topic. If you have expertise in a field, that’s a great place to start. Please read more about your topic to narrow it/find something not-totally-obvious to say about it. These are examples – please find your own great, specific, interesting-to-you topic.

## Examples of specificity

*(this is NOT a list of the only topics you can choose from, just a few examples)*

* No: Too general/ obvious/ overdone by a million student writers: Should we legalize marijuana?
* Better: More narrow/specific topics in similar areas:
  + Is marijuana an effective treatment for X disease?
  + Should health insurance plans pay for medical marijuana?
  + Should Country X (not the USA) change its drug policy? How/why?
* No: Too general/ obvious/ overdone by a million student writers: Are pets good?
* Better: More narrow/specific topics in similar areas:
  + Should therapy animals be allowed in public buildings?
  + Should landlords be required to allow tenants to keep pets?
  + Should city taxes pay for dog parks?
* No: Too general/ obvious/ overdone by a million student writers: Is technology helpful or harmful?
* Better: More narrow/specific topics in similar areas:
  + How has Twitter changed pro-democracy movements in the Middle East?
  + How have advances in medical care for premature babies affected their outcomes?
  + Does taking notes by hand improve student performance?
* No: Too general/ obvious/ overdone by a million student writers: Is a vegetarian diet better?
* Better: More narrow/specific topics in similar areas:
  + Is strict veganism healthy for children under five years old?
  + Does growing soybeans really have less environmental impact than pastured cattle?
  + Should schools serve locally grown produce in their subsidized lunch programs?