Research Paper

What is a Research Paper?

A research paper is a source-based essay; it involves both writing and research. You must choose a topic, find information about that topic, and then use that information to help you write about the topic.

- You are NOT summarizing what others have said about the topic.
- You are *using* what others have said to help you write an informed, thoughtful paper.
    - You must write an original thesis, helped by knowledge gained from research.
    - You must support your thesis with original thoughts, helped by outside sources.

Types of Research Papers

- **Argumentative Research Paper**
    - Tries to persuade or convince the reader of a position (thesis).
    - Topic must be debatable.
    - The reader must be able to disagree with the position/thesis. *Your goal is to make the reader agree with you.*
        - Example of an Argumentative Thesis: *Due to its unreliability, the results of lie detector tests should not be used as evidence in court cases*.

- **Analytical Research Paper**
    - Tries to create new knowledge by asking and answering a research question.
    - Topic may or may not be debatable.
    - The reader *may* be able to disagree with the answer to the research question, OR the reader may find the answer interesting because of its originality. *Your goal is to create new knowledge.*
        - Example of an Analytical Thesis: *The novel* My Antonía *by Willa Cather has a loosely organized plot and many diverse characters because it is a "snapshot" of America.*

An effective research paper will have

- An Introduction that
    - Tells the reader what the topic is
    - Gives necessary background information on the topic
    - **States a clear, specific thesis**
    - **States the specific support for the thesis**
- Body paragraphs that
    - Begin with Topic Sentences that relate to your thesis and/or its specific support
    - Develop each specific support for the thesis, using outside research to help
    - **Introduce ALL outside sources, whether quoted or paraphrased**
    - **Explain WHY each outside source is credible for your topic**
    - **Explain WHY each outside source supports your thesis**
- A Conclusion that
    - Restates the thesis
    - Summarizes the main support for the thesis