The Very Basics of How to Write a Research Paper

It can be frustrating and scary if you have never written a research paper (essay), or it has been a long time since you did this kind of thing. There are entire books on how to write an informative, persuasive (argumentative) research paper, or essay. There are semester-long courses that teach you how to write a research paper, essay, or give a speech. The goal of this web page is NOT to write a book on this subject. The goal is to give you the "quick and dirty" basics of how to write a research paper, or essay.

We know that many people do not have time to write a paper. We know that writing a research paper can be a very time-consuming and frustrating project. Some people are good at math or other subjects, but writing a research paper is just not their thing. We understand, and that is why we will present the very basics of the basics on how to write a research paper/essay. This will be "quick and dirty" advice on how to write a research paper/essay.

Step One: Choosing a Topic

Most teachers will give the standard advice for the student to choose a topic that is interesting to the student. That is fine if there is a lot of information on the topic that interests you. However, some assignments call for you to find a book, magazine article, journal article, and newspaper article on the subject to help support what you are writing. Some teachers will not allow you to use only the Internet as a source of information for your informative or persuasive, research paper, essay, or speech. There are some topics where there is not much information to be found. The topics are interesting, BUT there is not much written about those subjects. Another common requirement by teachers is to find information within the past five years. Often, currency of the information is important. Again, you may find information on your very interesting subject but the books or articles are older than five years. We have seen many students become VERY FRUSTRATED trying to find books and articles within five years of publication for their subjects.

This is our best advice and we will tell you why we give you this advice. Most people who we help have lives. Students have spouses, children, and all kinds of things to take care of besides trying to earn a degree. Education is great, but it is a "means to an end." Most people want a degree in order to get a very good job that benefits them and their families. Writing a paper can be a very time-consuming, frustrating adventure. It is admirable to try to write a paper on something that interests you, but if you cannot find much information on that subject, then why frustrate yourself? Our best advice is to choose a popular topic that has been "in the news" for years that allows you to access plenty of books, magazine, journal, and newspaper articles, especially within the past five years. We are talking about research topics such as abortion, adoption, bullying, capital punishment (death penalty), cloning, euthanasia, global warming, gun control, home schooling, legalization of drugs (marijuana), immigration, same sex marriage,

stem cells, and video games (effects of mass media violence). These represent just a few topics where you can find plenty of information for or against each subject.

Step Two: Collecting the Information about your Topic.

Okay, here is where we get to the "quick and dirty" tips on finding information. If you have to write a persuasive or argumentative essay, then you have to take a side (stand) on some topic. If you do not have a clue on all the issues with a specific topic, there are sources of information that can help you find the "issues" quickly.

"*Issues and Controversies*" is a database that can be found in some libraries (academic or large public libraries). The libraries subscribe to the service for a fee so their patrons can use the source for free. Basically, you type your topic into the computer and the computer will present about ten-pages of information about the common pros and cons of your topic. Instead of reading a two-hundred page book or reading a few two-hundred page books in order to find out all about your topic, you can read the **ten-pages** that *Issues and Controversies* provides and know the issues associated with your topic.

Opposing Viewpoints are a series of books that are about 100-pages in length. As the title of the series suggests, these books provide the pros and cons on different issues. There is one book devoted to one "issue." Each book provides many perspectives on the issues of a specific issue such as abortion, adoption, capital punishment, cyber bullying, stem cells, and more.

There are other resources that do the same thing as *Issues and Controversies* and *Opposing Viewpoints* that are available. Please check with your local library to see what they have to help you.

Books, Magazines, Newspapers, and Journals.

Once you know the issues, you need to find specific information about those issues. This is where you really should go to your local library, especially an academic library and see what they have to offer.

Just about everything is automated now. If you want to find a book on a subject, the library should have an online / computer catalog.

Magazine, newspaper, and journal articles can now be found online. Many libraries pay for a service from companies such as EBSCO, InfoTrac, OCLC, ProQuest, and more. There is way too much to write on this subject so we tell you the basic concept. These companies pay publishers to put magazine, newspaper, and journal articles on their computers. The library will pay for a subscription to a company such as EBSCO so that the library's patrons can access entire magazine, newspaper, and scholarly journal articles for FREE. Basically, the student types in a topic in the computer database and the computer retrieves articles on that topic (the ENTIRE article). This is how it is done these days. It can be WAY TOO TIME-CONSUMING

to try to find articles on a specific topic and a specific view by just browsing paper magazines. You NEED a computer database/index like what companies like EBSCO and InfoTrac can supply.

The computers that find books and articles can be very helpful. For example, let's say that you have to write a five-page, double-spaced research paper/essay on a topic. This has to be a persuasive, or argumentative paper where you take a stand, one way or the other on some issue. You decide to take the CON side and write against the death penalty. You may have heard some issues over the years, but what really are the issues? What do you do in order to find information about those issues?

- Go to your library's online book catalog to see if they have books about capital punishment. Hopefully, they have books such as *Opposing Viewpoints*. Hopefully, the library has something like *Issues and Controversies*. By viewing the books, you find out that some of the issues with the death penalty surround four or five key issues such as: deterrence, retribution, innocent people on death row, and cruel and unusual punishment (Eighth Amendment).

- Often, it takes a number of resources to help get enough ideas and information to fill up a five-page paper. Many teachers prefer the students to cite (use) multiple resources. This is where the magazine and journal databases like InfoTrac can help. You can just type in the keywords "capital punishment" into the database and let the computer retrieve all the articles that it can find on capital punishment. However, you found the **main issues** on capital punishment, so you can narrow the search and spend less time by using specific keywords such as:

  Capital punishment and deterrent

  Capital punishment and retribution

  Capital punishment and innocent

  Capital punishment cruel and unusual

  Capital punishment and eighth amendment

  These search strategies allow you to retrieve articles about the **main** issues of capital punishment. You should NOT have to browse through hundreds of articles about capital punishment IF you narrow the search by using the MAIN keywords that you found in sources such as *Issues and Controversies* or *Opposing Viewpoints*. This can save you time.

- Please note that not everything within the computer are full-text (entire) articles. Some records will include only the citation (author, title of article, title of magazine, publication

date, and page numbers). Many libraries offer an **interlibrary loan service** that can loan a book or copy of an article from another library FOR FREE. This is a standard service at many academic and large public libraries. This is a standard procedure in order to obtain books and articles for free. If you need to interlibrary loan a book or article that is not at your library, then please ask at the Reference Desk about the interlibrary loan service.

Step Three: Organizing the Information/Preparing to Write

At this time, we will very briefly mention the format of a paper. More explanation of MLA and APA "styles" of formatting your paper will be presented in **step seven**. However for now, let us just make you aware that before handing in the final paper to the teacher, the final research paper has to be typed according to the format that your teacher chooses. There are a lot of rules for writing research papers/essays and you need to follow the rules. For example, the lines (sentences) need to be double-spaced. That is a standard rule for just about any "format." For now, we will just explain the main parts of a research paper, but please keep in mind that you will need to format the research paper before handing it in.

There are three main parts to a research paper: The Introduction with the thesis statement, body of the paper, and the conclusion. Some people choose to prepare some type of outline while some students are forced to hand in a rough draft, or outline. An outline can be pretty straight forward. Basically, you write the main ideas or headings and then the sub-headings under those main headings.

Here is an example of a very basic outline for a short paper arguing against capital punishment.

    I.   INTRODUCTION

    II.   RETRIBUTION

    III.   DETERRENCE

    IV.   EIGHTH AMENDMENT

    V.   CONCLUSION

Here is another possible outline for a much more lengthy research paper:

    I.   INTRODUCTION

    II.   HISTORY

          A. United States

The second outline represents a ten-page or more paper that could be written based on the headings and sub-headings listed in the outline. Capital punishment has been a controversy since ancient times throughout multiple countries. Many pages could be filled-up by just writing about the history of the death penalty. There are a number of issues that can be added to a paper such as recidivism (protection of society from repeat offenders) and the financial cost of the death penalty. As you can see, if you pick a well-known topic, you can pick and choose how much time you want to spend on a paper.

Step Four: The Introduction including the Thesis Statement.

Oh yes, the introduction and thesis statement. If you have never written a college research paper, then it is likely that you will think that we are out of our minds when we try to explain this part of the paper. Did we say that there are rules to writing a paper? Oh yes, we did.

The introduction is where you introduce the reader to the rest of the paper. The introduction, including the thesis statement, are suppose to grab the reader. Let's stay with the example of arguing against the death penalty. It would be so nice **IF** all you had to do in the introduction is say something like this: "This paper is about capital punishment and how the United States should abolish the death penalty."   Wouldn't that be nice to just say THAT for the introduction AND thesis statement? Well, in academia the previous introduction with thesis statement is too simple. It is not artistic enough. It does not grab the reader as it should. Oh no. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. It cannot be THAT simple.

The introduction should tell the reader what the paper is all about and the thesis statement is a statement that tells the reader specifically what your view is on the subject and how you are going to support that view. The KEY is to do this in a creative, artsy, artistic, type of way. The main concept is to be creative and artsy. If may sound confusing to you because **IT** IS CONFUSING. Let us try to explain the introduction and thesis statement by giving examples.

Example One of introduction and thesis statement:

Here is an example of an introductory paragraph including a thesis statement that we type in BOLD lettering for instructional purposes. This paper is PRO death penalty:

Capital punishment has been a controversy throughout the world for centuries. It seems like just about everyone has an opinion on this topic. There are definite, well-defined divisions on the death penalty. For most people, you are either for the death penalty or against it. Both sides feel that they have valid arguments. **However, there is convincing evidence that the death penalty should be a part of the judicial system because of the need for retribution, deterrence, and protection of society.**

We got kind of creative with the first three sentences leading the reader into the thesis statement. If you see the thesis statement, we did not just come out and say "Hey, I am for the death penalty." No, rather than be that direct, we tried to be a little artistic coming about the thesis statement a little indirectly by saying "However, there is convincing evidence that the death penalty should be part of the judicial system." Creatively, we continued that statement by briefly listing how we were going to argue in the body of the paper our point of view by writing about retribution, deterrence, and the need to protect society.

Example Two of introduction and thesis statement:

Here is an example of an introductory paragraph including a thesis statement that we type in BOLD lettering for instructional purposes. This paper is AGAINST the death penalty:

Capital punishment has been a controversy throughout the world for centuries. It seems like just about everyone has an opinion on this topic. There are definite, well-defined divisions on the death penalty. For most people, you are either for the death penalty or against it. Both sides feel that they have valid arguments. **However, there is convincing evidence that the death penalty should be abolished because capital punishment is cruel and unusual punishment, puts innocent people on death row, administered inconsistently and with bias, costs too much, and is not a deterrent.**

Please note that the first three sentences are about the same as the PRO death penalty paper above, BUT the thesis statement is different because this paper is going to argue the CON side of the death penalty.

Again, the first three sentences give a very, very brief introduction to the death penalty but it does so in a kind of creative way. The thesis statement is "there is convincing evidence that the death penalty should be abolished." In the next sentence, we creatively and artistically continued to briefly mention the arguments (reasons) that we will use in the body of this paper to convince people that the death penalty should be abolished.

We have seen some teachers satisfied with including just the thesis statement "However, there is convincing evidence that the death penalty should be abolished." Some teachers will not mind if

you do not mention your arguments in the thesis statement. **However**, we have seen many teachers become EXTREMELY IMPRESSED if you can creatively include the reasons in the introductory paragraph. The reasons in the introductory paragraph give the reader some idea of what to expect in the body of the paper.

Example Three of introduction and thesis statement:

Here is an example of an introductory paragraph including a thesis statement that we type in BOLD lettering for instructional purposes. This research paper argues that cyber bullying should be considered and treated as a crime:

Bullying has been around for ages throughout most countries. It seems like most people have some memory of some bully intimidating or making fun of them. For many, bullying happened at school, but it can happen at any time in one's life. Thanks to the information and technology explosion many positive changes have affected our lives. However, there have been negative consequences of the rapid expansion of the Internet and communication technology. One of those alarming issues is a new form of bullying called cyber bullying. Like bullying, many people feel that cyber bullying is not a big deal. Many feel that it is a normal part of life that people just have to deal with the best that they can. **However, cyber bullying is something that should concern everyone. Cyber bullying uses ruthless tactics and should be considered a crime because it is a form of harassment that causes victims to suffer feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem, humiliation, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide. (We put the thesis statement in bold for instructional purposes.)**

We were able to get a little more creative with the introductory paragraph. We use quite a few introductory sentences to grab the reader. Technically, the thesis statement is "Cyber bullying uses ruthless tactics and **should be considered a crime**." The main goal of this paper is to prove that cyber bullying is a crime and should be treated as such by the judicial system. We added the reasons why we thought that cyber bullying should be considered a crime by saying "it is a form of harassment that causes victims to suffer feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem, humiliation, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide." We will use these reasons, and more, in the body of the paper to prove that cyber bullying should be considered a CRIME.

Example Four of introduction and thesis statement:

Here is an example of an introductory paragraph including a thesis statement that we type in BOLD lettering for instructional purposes. This paper argues that cyber bullying should NOT be considered a crime. The education system rather than the judicial system should handle cyber bullying:

Some people feel that cyber bullying is no big deal. Cyber bullying is not all that different than the bullying that most people are subjected to in the schoolyard and it is kind of a childhood rite of passage. However, there are some people who know that cyber bullying is a serious matter but they believe that education rather than the judicial system is the proper way to solve the problem. **Cyber bullying should not be considered a crime. Educating all involved by teaching the bully the effects of his/her actions, showing teachers how to handle bullies, and teaching parents and children what to do about cyber bullying is the correct way to solve cyber bullying. (We put the thesis statement in bold for instructional purposes.)**

We admit that the thesis statement "Cyber bullying should not be considered a crime" is pretty direct. It is not as "artistic" as we would like, but we fell it is acceptable. What really helps is that we followed that thesis statement with another sentence including the reasons why we feel that cyber bullying should not be considered a crime. In a way, the following sentence is part of the thesis statement: "**Educating** all involved by teaching the bully the effects of his/her actions, showing teachers how to handle bullies, and teaching parents and children what to do about cyber bullying **is the correct way to solve cyber bullying**."

Step Five: The Body of the Paper

The body of the paper is where you provide the support for your thesis statement. This is where you support the reasons given in the introduction. If you are arguing against capital punishment, then this is where you can write about:

- Studies that show that the death penalty is NOT a deterrent.

- A number of people have been exonerated after being on death row.

- Violation of the Eighth Amendment as the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment.

- Death penalty is about vengeance, not retribution.

- Studies show that it cost less to house a person a life time in prison then to try to administer the death penalty (appeals and court costs add up).

Step Six: The Conclusion

You begin the research paper (essay) being creative and artsy so, too, with the conclusion you will end the research paper being creative and artsy.

The conclusion can/should look a little like the introductory paragraph. With the conclusion, a lot of teachers would like to see you kind of restate the original thesis statement and wrap up with a very brief summary of what you have written in the research paper. You may not want to restate the thesis exactly word-for-word like what was stated in the introductory paragraph. Once again, you need to apply some creativity when writing the conclusion. If you have any questions on thesis statements, conclusions, or any part of the research paper process, **TALK TO YOUR TEACHER. The teacher is the final authority on how to write a paper or essay.**

Example One of a Conclusion:

Here is an example of a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph and then the conclusion to a research paper that is AGAINST the death penalty:

Introduction with thesis statement that we typed in bold for instructional purpose only:

"Capital punishment has been a controversy throughout the world for centuries. It seems like just about everyone has an opinion on this topic. There are definite, well-defined divisions on the death penalty. For most people, you are either for the death penalty or against it. Both sides feel that they have valid arguments. **However, there is convincing evidence that the death penalty should be abolished because capital punishment is cruel and unusual punishment, puts innocent people on death row, administered inconsistently and with bias, costs too much, and is not a deterrent.**"

After writing pages of support in the body of the paper for the thesis statement AGAINST the death penalty, following is a possible conclusion for the final paragraph of the research paper. We placed the rewritten thesis statement in bold for your benefit so that you can see how we worded the thesis statement a little differently from the original thesis statement in the introduction.

Conclusion:

"Both sides of the death penalty debate feel that they are right. There are plenty of arguments that each side can use to validate their views. The only thing that most people can agree on is that this controversy has raged for thousands of years and there seems to be no end in sight. **However, the death penalty should be abolished because studies show that it is not a deterrent, innocent people may be put to death, and it is cruel and unusual punishment.**"

So, once again, we try to get creative in the conclusion of this research essay arguing against capital punishment. The first three sentences try to give a very, very brief summary of what was written for the body of the paper supporting the thesis statement. The final sentence tries to restate the original thesis statement a little differently and in an artsy way than the original thesis statement in the opening paragraph.

Example Two of a Conclusion:

Here is an example of an introductory paragraph including a thesis statement that we type in BOLD lettering for instructional purposes. We would NOT bold anything if we were handing this paper in. This research paper argues that cyber bullying should be considered and treated as a crime. Following the thesis statement example is an example of a possible conclusion to this paper including a thesis statement that is worded differently than the original thesis statement within the introduction.

Introduction with thesis statement that argues that cyber bullying should be treated as a crime:

"Bullying has been around for ages throughout most countries. It seems like most people have some memory of some bully intimidating or making fun of them. For many, bullying happened at school, but it can happen at any time in one's life. Thanks to the information and technology explosion many positive changes have affected our lives. However, there have been negative consequences of the rapid expansion of the Internet and communication technology. One of those alarming issues is a new form of bullying called cyber bullying. Like bullying, many people feel that cyber bullying is not a big deal. Many feel that it is a normal part of life that people just have to deal with the best that they can. **However, cyber bullying is something that should concern everyone. Cyber bullying uses ruthless tactics and should be considered a crime because it is a form of harassment that causes victims to suffer feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem, humiliation, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide.**"

After writing pages of support in the body of the paper for the thesis statement that cyber bullying should be considered and treated by the judicial system as a crime, following is a possible conclusion for the final paragraph of the research paper. We placed the rewritten thesis statement in bold for your benefit so that you can see how we worded the thesis statement a little differently from the original thesis statement in the introduction.

Conclusion:

"Cyber bullying has become a fact of life for many young people, as well as some adults. The old image of the school-yard bully has a new image and new tools to carry out his/her attacks. Education and awareness can help prevent some bullying as well as some grief for the victims. However, education is not enough. **Cyber bullying is a serious offense that is a crime. Cyber bullying harasses people and causes them to suffer emotional stress, and at times, physical pain.** Like just about any crime, there will be individuals in society who will not be able to stop themselves from inflicting harm on others. Many cyber bullies are no different than other criminals convicted of other crimes. Unfortunately, government has to step in and help police the actions of others who want to use cyber technology to harass and harm their fellow human beings."

Example two is a little more creatively done. The thesis statement is direct but it is embedded in the conclusion in an artistic kind of way. Realistically, it would be great if you could write a conclusion like this: "This research paper was about proving that cyber bullying is a major crime and we gave good enough arguments above to prove that." It would be great if you could be that honest and realistic. **However**, you **CANNOT** do that and expect to get a great grade. We hate to say that you have to "play the game," but in a way many students can argue that this is about "playing a game." Whatever way that you want to look at it, there are rules to writing a paper just as there are rules to just about everything in life. For most people, if you do not play by the rules, things will not go well. That is the same for writing research papers and other matters related to school. We are sorry to say that when it comes to writing a paper, you need to get creative and follow some rules.

Step Seven: Citing your Sources

In the last part of step six we mentioned something about "RULES" which is a great way to lead into "citing" the resources that you used whether it is the "works cited" list or in-text. If you have never written a research paper before and never had to deal with terms such as, citations, in-text citation, MLA Format, APA Format, works cited, and plagiarism, then there is NO WAY we can teach you about these concepts on this website. When it comes to "citing" your sources, we advise you to seek human help in the form of a teacher, school writing center, writing workshop, or something like that. However, we will try to explain some of these concepts to help you understand, to some degree, what the world of citing your sources is all about.

In step two way above, we wrote about collecting information from books, magazines, newspapers, and journals to help you obtain ideas and support to help you write the paper. If you copy any of the information from those sources and use it in your paper, you need to "cite", or give credit to the original author of what you used in your paper. To copy another person's idea or work without giving credit for that information is called PLAGIARISM and plagiarism is taken VERY SERIOUSLY by teachers. It is CHEATING. Just about any school administration

takes plagiarism extremely serious and can result in very bad consequences for the student if the student is caught copying material without giving the proper credit.

In order to give proper credit to where proper credit is due, there are all kinds of **rules** on how to cite (mention) a source. When you "**cite**" a source, you **mention** the source. You **give credit** to the person who wrote the original information. Over the many decades, different organizations have created rules on how to cite many, many different sources of information. There are rules to cite a book, magazine article, journal article, newspaper articles, and photographs. With the advancement of the Internet, there are rules on how to cite ONLINE books, magazine articles, journals articles, newspaper articles, websites, blogs, emails, and much, much more.

If that wasn't confusing enough, different organizations made up their own rules and different teachers want their students to follow a specific organization's rules. Here is a short list of the more popular organizations that are responsible for their own rules (format) developed to cite materials:

Modern Language Association (MLA) style of formatting a paper is often used for the humanities, English, literature, and language disciplines.

American Psychological Association (APA) style of formatting a paper is often used for the sciences. If you have a science class, then it is highly likely that your teacher is going to require you to use the APA style of writing your paper and documenting your resources (books, articles).

Turabian style of formatting an essay is based on Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Often, this style is referred to as the "Chicago Manual of Style," also. It really depends on your instructor for selecting this style. It appears that this particular style emphasizes the use of footnotes.

There are more "styles" but it is safe to say that the MLA Style and APA Style are the two most popular styles used for formatting the research paper/essay. All of these styles have their own books of rules (manuals). There are really, really, A LOT of rules on how to format the research paper and cite (give credit) to the resources used. We will start out by trying to give you some idea of what formatting is all about by presenting the first page of an MLA formatted research paper. The print in red is our instruction/explanation on why things were done the way they were done. (Sometimes web pages do not keep the proper formatting and spaces so we present this example in PDF format which maintains the spacing. If the following sentences are all messed up, then please click on the PDF format link to see the PDF file.)

Joe Student

Professor Writepaper

English 101

20 February 2011

Cyber Bullying Should be Considered a Crime and Prosecuted Accordingly

Bullying has been around for ages throughout most countries. It seems like most people have some memory of some bully intimidating or making fun of them. For many, bullying happened at school but it can happen at any time in one's life. Thanks to the information and technology explosion that continues to this day, many positive changes have affected our lives. However, there have been negative consequences of the rapid expansion of the capabilities of the Internet. One of those alarming issues is a new form of bullying called cyber bullying. Like bullying, many people feel that cyber bullying is not a big deal. Many feel that it is a normal part of life that people just have to deal with the best that they can. However, cyber bullying is something that should concern everyone. Cyber bullying should be considered a crime because it a form of harassment that causes victims to suffer feelings of depression, isolation, low self esteem, humiliation, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide.

When looking at the sample first page of a research paper formatted according to MLA rules, there are some things to remember.

- Just about everything is double-spaced.

- There is a one inch margin on the left and right sides of the paper, as well as the bottom and top of the paper. Basically, there is a one-inch margin all around on each page.
- The title of the paper is centered and notice the capitalization of the words in the title.
- For MLA format, there is no real "cover" page. What you see as page one IS the first page/cover page.
- Notice how the page number is in the far upper right corner of the page with the student's last name and then page number.
- Notice on the upper left corner of the page that the student lists the student's name, followed by class name, following by instructor' name, and then the final date of the paper. This information is double-spaced as is just about everything in the paper. Please notice how in the date that the day is first, then the month, and then the year. This IS according to the Modern Language Association's (MLA) rules/style.

The example above is written according to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th ed.)*. This is the book that has the rules. If you do not follow the format given in the example above, your instructor will most likely take some points off your paper.

To give you an idea on how the formatting business works, let us show you the same first page as seen above, plus the second and third pages, but this time formatted to the other very popular form of formatting papers and that is according to the **APA style**:

PLEASE GO TO NEXT PAGE

Cyber Bullying Should be Considered a Crime and Prosecuted Accordingly

Joe Student

Professor Writepaper

English 101

20 February 2011

Abstract

Bullying has been around for ages throughout most countries. It seems like most people have some memory of some bully intimidating or making fun of them. For many, bullying happened at school but it can happen at any time in one's life. Thanks to the information and technology explosion that continues to this day, many positive changes have affected our lives. However, there have been negative consequences of the rapid expansion of the capabilities of the Internet. One of those alarming issues is a new form of bullying called cyber bullying. Like bullying, many people feel that cyber bullying is not a big deal. Many feel that it is a normal part of life that people just have to deal with the best that they can. However, cyber bullying is something that should concern everyone. Cyber bullying should be considered a crime because it a form of harassment that causes victims to suffer feelings of depression, isolation, low self esteem, humiliation, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide.

Cyber Bullying Should be Considered a Crime and Prosecuted Accordingly

The Concise Oxford American Dictionary defines bully as "a person who uses strength or power to harm or intimidate who are weaker." Most of us have been the victim of a bully. For most of us it was a very uncomfortable situation but we survived. However, due to advancements in technology there is now a new form of bullying called cyber bullying. There are multiple definitions for cyber bullying but most would agree that cyber bullying is the persistent use of technology to harass, threaten, and humiliate someone. Cyber bullies use technology such as e-mail, social networks, chat rooms, and cell phones to "harm or intimidate who are weaker." Cyber bullies use number of techniques to harass their victims. Denigration is a technique used to harm a victim's reputation and character. The bully may place humiliating photos of the victim on the World Wide Web. False, vicious lies in the form of text can damage a person's reputation. Flaming refers to an aggressive exchange of electronic messages between the bully and the victim. It may not start out as much, but it can quickly escalate to include multiple people and intense emotions. One of the attributes of the Internet that appeals to the cyber bully is the ability to be anonymous, and that is where impersonation comes into play. Impersonation is the term used to describe a situation where the bully makes people believe that he/she is the victim

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WOW, if you compare the first page of the MLA formatted paper with the first few pages of the APA formatted paper then all you can say is "WHAT A DIFFERENCE." What is with the "Running head" with APA style? Well, we will not go there. Everyone is different and each instructor will have their preferences in the particular style/format that they want you to use. Like we said, if you take science classes then you will likely be using the APA format. For us, we liked the MLA format but like we said, everyone is different and different disciplines require

different formats. All we can do is help make you aware that there are different rules to use to write the research paper, or essay. There are books and websites that can help you figure this out, but we recommend contacting your teacher, school writing center, or tutoring center. If you have never done this type of thing before, it can be REALLY confusing. Okay, we admit that IF you have done this a number of times, STILL, it can be confusing.

Citing the Sources (books, magazine articles, websites, and more)

Now, that we have shown you that there are RULES to writing a paper, there are no more important rules than the ones that show you how to "cite" the sources. You need to give credit to the author, or source, that you used or quoted in your research paper, essay, or speech. There are specific rules on how to cite a source and each format is different. To try to make this make sense, we are going to use just one format and that will be MLA. We will start by showing what a "Works Cited" page looks like at the end of your paper/report/essay. At the end of your paper, you have to list the resources that you quoted, or referred to in some way, in the paper. You make an alphabetical list at the end of the paper. MLA calls this list "Works Cited." In APA format, the list is called "References." Following, we will present a sample "Works Cited" page in MLA format. The format, punctuation, spacing, are all CRITICAL to receiving full credit for this page. For that reason, we will supply the following sample in PDF format so that you can see the proper format. Sometimes these web pages do not look the same on different computers. The following "Works Cited" list is a list of **citations**. Citation is a standard school term when it comes to writing papers. Usually, a citation contains the author, title of book or article, title of the publication such as *Time* or *Newsweek*, volume number, issue number, date of publication, and page numbers. Here is an example of the a MLA "works cited" page at the end of a research paper about cyberbullying:

Works Cited

Holladay, Jennifer. "Cyberbullying." *The Education Digest* 76.5 (2011): 4-9. Print.

Kowalski, Robin M., Susan P. Limber, and Patricia W. Agatston. *Cyber Bullying: Bullying in the*

Digital Age. Malden: Blackwell, 2008.

Lenhart, Amanda. "Cyberbullying: What the Research is Telling U*s*." 2010. *Pew Internet &*

American Life Project. SlideShare. Web. 20 February 2011.

Meredith, Jessica P. "Combating Cyberbullying: Emphasizing Education over Criminalization."

Federal Communications Law Journal 63.1 (2010): 311-40. Print.

This short list of resources (citations) gives you an idea of the "Works Cited" page.

- The list is double-spaced.

- The list is alphabetized according to author. If there was no author for one of the citations, then you would alphabetize the citation according to the title. For example if the Lenhart, Amanda website did not have an author listed, the citation would be placed at the top of the list because the title starts with "C" for Cyberbullying.

- The student's last name and page number continues to appear in the upper right corner of the page.

- The title of this page is Works Cited and this title is centered.

- Each citation shown above is typed that way because it is according to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th ed.)*. It is according to the RULES.

Let's take a look at the first citation (Holladay citation) to see what is going one.

- It is standard MLA procedure to list last name, then the first name.

- It is standard MLA procedure to place a magazine or journal **article title (title of the article)** in quotes like "Cyberbullying."

- It is standard MLA procedure to italicize the title of the publication. *The Education Digest* is the name of the journal. It is NOT the title of the article.

- 76 is the volume number. The 5 is the issue number.

- 2011 in parentheses is the publication date. Sometimes you include the year and sometimes the full date.

- Include the page numbers if given.

- In 2009, MLA and APA formats made some revisions. One of those revisions for MLA was to include whether the source was in PRINT form or from the WEB. In this Holladay citation example, the source was in the print form of the journal so the word Print was added to the end of the citation.

- Please notice all the spacing, periods, colons, italics, quotes and other punctuation as it is necessary according to the rules.

- If the citation takes up two or more lines, the second and more lines need to be indented an inch and a half from the left margin. Basically, the lines under that first line needs to be indented about five or seven spaces. This is called a "hanging indentation." The Kowalski citation under the Holladay citation is a good example. You may ask WHY do that? All that we can say is "don't ask, just do it." It has been like this for decades. There are all kinds of rules to follow.

In-Text Citations:

We will mention one more type of citation that gives credit to the author of the original work. We mentioned the "Works Cited" page that appears at the END of the paper that gives credit to the authors. There is something called "in-text" citations. When you quote **within** the research paper, or essay (IN the TEXT), you need to cite the author (resource) at that time, also. There are a couple of reasons for doing this. One, you give credit to the source. Two, the reader of the paper can see the author and then find the entire citation on the "Works Cited" page. Sometimes the reader wants to see the entire article or book that was cited in the paper. The reader sees the name of the author that was cited within the text and then finds the entire publication information on the "Works Cited" page so the reader can find the entire article.

Example of In-Text Citation:

"We have Second Amendment rights to possess weapons, but that doesn't mean we allow

children to bring guns to school (Holladay 7)."

In the body of the cyberbullying research paper, we used a quote from the original journal article written by Jennifer Holladay. We needed to give credit to the original quote so we did so by citing Jennifer Holladay's article. If the reader wants to read more about this quote, the reader can go to the "Works Cited" page; look under Holladay because the list is alphabetized; and see that he/she needs to locate this article in The Education Digest, volume 76, issue 5 of January 2011. According to the in-text citation, the quote can be found on page 7.

THAT is what "in-text" citations are all about.

There is more that we could say BUT the information presented above it he quick and dirty tips on how to write a research paper. Like we said before, there is quite a bit to writing a college research paper. There are books on this subject that can help, as well as your teacher, workshops, and tutors.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at: **collegecareers72@gmail.com**