

# Guidelines for Writing Papers

## Bashiri

### Plagiarism Policy

The administration, faculty, staff, and students of the University of Minnesota are committed to academic integrity and respect for intellectual property. Plagiarism is one form of intellectual dishonesty. Simply put, plagiarism is representing someone else's intellectual property as your own. Intellectual property can take many forms--a whole term paper, an idea or insight, a photograph, a drawing, a song, a unique way of wording something, a discovery, etc. The simple cure for plagiarism is to err on the side of caution: Cite your sources for any inspiration or material taken from someone else's work.

Students at the University of Minnesota are held to high standards with regard to scholastic honesty and ethics. We have University wide policies, departmental policies, and individual policies announced on syllabi for specific courses. Through the links on the plagiarism Web site <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/index.html>, you will find more detailed explanations of these policies, as well as helpful tips for recognizing and avoiding plagiarism.

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In the writing of a paper, three things are of particular importance:

- a) A topic that is relevant to the course and which you would like to research, think about and write about
- b) The organization of the paper
- c) The presentation of the paper

Combine your past experiences and information from the course to come up with a topic that you would like to know more about. Once you have identified the topic, discuss it with your friends or with the course instructor and gather some preliminary information about the topic. Then go to the library and check out a book or two about the subject. Skim or read these books, always having in the forefront of your mind the reason for reading them. If the topic continues to interest you, find more books and articles about the topic and check them out.

Some subjects at the stage you are might seem boundless. On the basis of your reading thus far, and of the interest that drove you to research the subject, put a limit on the subject. Check the books (table of contents and index) you are working with for particular references to your narrowed-down subject. Make sure that there is enough information to support a discussion of the generalities and the particulars of the topic.

When ready to work on the paper, read the relevant portions of the books and make copious notes. For later reference, give each note a separate page (or a card) and for each note include the name of the author, title of the book, the name of the publisher, and the date of publication. Example:

The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire.

Author: Edward W. Said

Title: *Orientalism*,

Publisher and date of publication: Vintage Books, 1978, pp. 202-03.

In the paper, you can use the information on the card either in paraphrase form or as a quotation. In either case, you must reflect all the information regarding referencing that book in a footnote:

<sup>1</sup> Said, 1978, pp. 202-03

And in your Bibliography:

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, 1978.

When note taking is complete, devise a strategy for the presentation of your paper and arrange your notes according to that strategy: thematic, chronological, etc. Then begin writing the paper.

On the top right hand side of the page, provide the following information: **your name, title of the course, course number, course instructor, and date the paper is due.**

Give your paper a title that you think best conveys your thoughts about the topic.

Begin the paper with an introduction that clearly sets forth what you intend to present (cf., the author's conception of the content of the book in "Book Report Guidelines") and how you intend to present it. The introduction must establish the importance of the topic as well as reflect what will be included in the body of the paper. It should show that you know enough about the various aspects of the topic to address it properly. It also should show the extent of your contribution to the body of knowledge you have examined. The title of the paper by itself does not convey the information outlined above. It is imperative that that information is included in the introduction.

The body of the paper is a discussion of your understanding of the topic. Support your thoughts with the facts that you have gleaned from the books you have consulted. And this is, indeed, where your originality comes into play. The way you frame your thoughts and present them indicates to the reader how much of yourself you have put into your paper. For this reason, try to allow both the thoughts contributed by others and those of your own to blend, grow, and emerge as a new entity. In your presentation, focus on the major topic, make minimum use of quotations and statistics, and use transitional phrases such as "in addition," "on the other hand," and "furthermore" to move smoothly across subthemes.

As you proceed with the writing, and as you use your notes, acknowledge the help of absent friends who have thought about the same subject before you, sometimes centuries before. Give your reader the necessary data mentioned above (i.e., footnotes and bibliography) so that he/she can quickly access the materials you have used for furthering his/her knowledge or, indeed, for checking some of your facts.

Add a section called "Conclusion." In this section, do not add any new information; rather, to help your reader grasp your total contribution without rereading portions or all of your paper, provide a summary of your arguments underscoring the important points presented.

Before handing in your paper, prepare a bibliography that includes a list of the books that you have used. Make sure that you use a consistent format for author, title, etc. throughout this bibliography. Do not abbreviate names and titles. A number of publications like the *MLA Style Sheet* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* are available to help you with this aspect.

If your study includes maps, illustrations, etc., add them as an appendix at the very end of your paper.

Finally, present your paper in an acceptable form. Make sure that all pages are in order with page numbers. Do not email your paper.

Happy Writing!