



Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper

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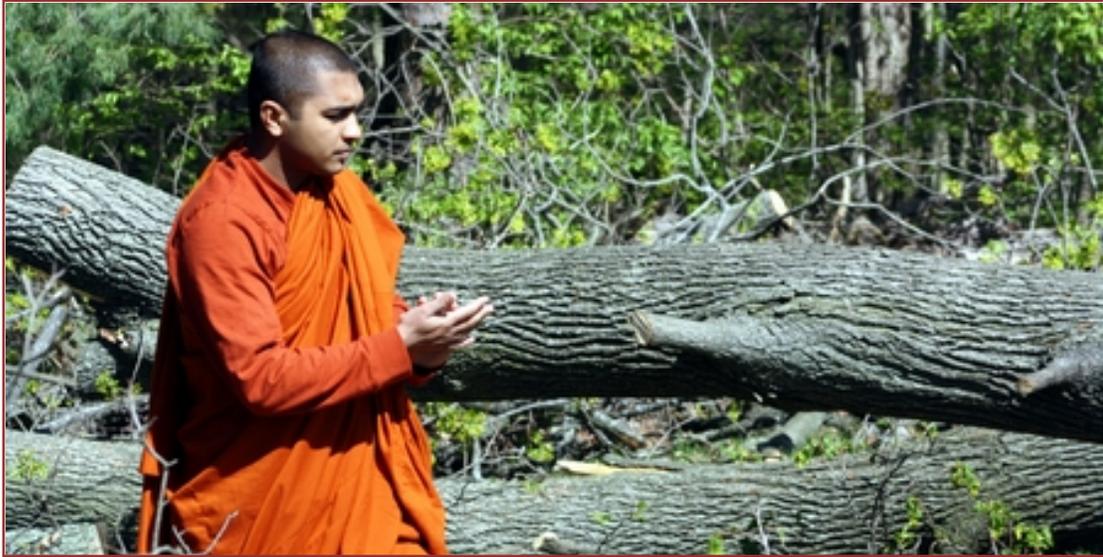
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Acknowledgements

If you have tea with Bhante Indarathana Deliwa, he will explain the merits one receives from practicing *vadaññutā* or acts of generosity. Such behavior is extremely meritorious.

The following individuals have provided editing assistance, permission to use their images, or shared a cup of tea at a crucial time. Because the *Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* is being distributed for free through a Creative Commons License, the most compensation that these individuals could hope for is the merits that come from acts of *vadaññutā*.

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Special Note to Students

I wrote the *Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* because I do not like current trends in the textbook industry. In order to justify prices which are much too high, textbooks designed to help students write better research papers have become so cumbersome that they are practically unusable.

The *Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* takes a middle way between providing you with nothing or providing you with something that is too overwhelming. It gives a general overview of key strategies you need to successfully write a research paper. More detailed information, for those who desire it, is distributed in on-line supplements to the workbook.



As I prepare this note, I am reminded of the cliché, “You get what you pay for.” These quickly quoted words of wisdom remind us that low price equals cheap content; that you cannot expect much quality from *The Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* because the book doesn’t cost you anything.

I am blessed to be in a position where all of my needs are met and I do not need to support myself on my writing and research. Therefore, I am privileged to provide what I hope you find to be a quality workbook at no cost to you.

Finally, I have used a conversational tone when writing *The Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* and hope the conversation can continue between us. I am also interested in any suggestions for improvement or information you have that can be added to the on-line, supplementary materials. Please use the e-mail address at the bottom of each page to contact me.

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Special Note to Faculty

I wrote the *Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* with two student audiences in mind.

First, the workbook could be used as the primary text in a second semester composition class where students are being taught how to write a research paper. In addition to cost, the advantage of *The Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* over other textbooks currently available is that it will not overwhelm students. Basic information is presented in a clear fashion.

The second audience is students who have to write a research paper to fulfill your course assignments; a course where you are unable to devote much class time to teaching research writing fundamentals. You can ask students to work through the workbook as they are writing their papers. By asking students to complete selected worksheets throughout the semester, you will provide them with valuable direction while helping insure higher quality papers than students typically produce when we simply tell them to write a paper.

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One of the key features of the *Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* is that it has been released under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Attribution 3.0 License. This means that you can legally make changes to the workbook—without my prior approval—before distributing it to your students. The details of this Creative Commons license can be found at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>.

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Share and Share Alike

I hope that by freely sharing my teaching materials with you, that you will be inspired to share your teaching materials with others.



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Comments and Suggestions

Comments and suggestions for improvement are always welcomed. Also, if you would like me to add resources to my on-line materials, please send me the link. I will add the link to my website and give you credit for making the suggestion.

Special Request

Even though you are under no legal obligation to do so, I would appreciate it if you would let me know how you are using the resource guide.

Additional Resources

In addition to *The Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper*, I have a variety of other teaching materials available on my Writing Resources website.

- <http://writing.stevenberg.info/>

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Introduction



Visitors were often surprised when a lama came out to greet them when they drove up my father's driveway. They ought not to have been. Lamas are curious animals prone to investigation.¹

Too often, research is approached as a dull, tedious exercise where one only encounters the expected. There are no surprises expected and none are found.

I grew up in a home where curiosity was encouraged and life was full of surprises. My brothers and I would encounter new worlds as my father read us bedtime stories about the *Happy Hollisters* or took us to worlds created by Dr. Seuss.

We traveled to various parts of the United States and we welcomed a variety of people into our lives. My parents always encouraged us to investigate the world.

It was in my formative years that I learned the joy of research. My father sold *World Book Encyclopedia*. If we had a question, we would look up the appropriate entry and be fascinated by what we found. As we grew older and could read for ourselves, we would investigate the world through books and magazines.

Because we were curious, research was a joy and we anticipated the surprises we discovered.

Today, I turn to Wikipedia instead of *World Book*. I also welcome the fact that I can easily access quality journals through the college databases and find facsimile reproductions of out-of-print books and pamphlets and other materials using the Internet and through Google Books.

What hasn't changed since the days I would sit on the couch listening to my father read is curiosity. I remain curious about the world and, as a result, research remains fun.

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¹ In my curious world, no one should be surprised that someone might keep a lama as a pet.



Quality Standards



Quality standards for research papers vary from discipline to discipline and from class to class. For example, some disciplines require that your paper use the format developed by the Modern Language Association. Others require the American Psychological Association format. In some classes you may only be required to write a brief three to five page paper. In others, the requirement could be up to 20 pages or more.

Although quality standards vary, there are some basic requirements for a research paper that are common to most disciplines. These standards are reflected in the Core Skills Writing Rubric developed by the faculty at Schoolcraft College.

To understand the quality standards expected in a course, be sure to review your syllabus. However, you need to remember that the syllabus is only a starting point. Your professor will likely supplement material from the syllabus with handouts, class lectures, and e-mail.

Suggestion for Success

This workbook was set up to be placed in a three ring binder. When you get a handout or e-mail from your professor concerning your research paper, you can insert it into your binder. You can also put your class notes in the Quality Standards section of your binder.

On-Line Resources

Basic MLA Format

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/mla>

Core Skills Writing Rubric

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/core/index.html>

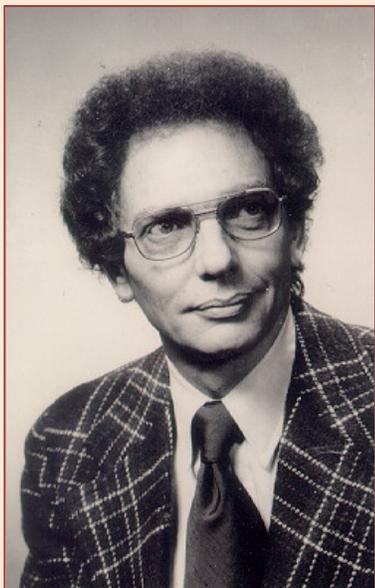


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Student Name: _____

Syllabus Review Worksheet



As a student in one of Dr. R. Glenn Wright's classes at Justin Morrill College,² I wrote a brilliant paper. I am not being an egomaniac in saying this. Dr. Wright agreed.

In addition to agreeing that I had done an excellent piece of research, Dr. Wright also rejected the paper and made me re-do it. The problem is that my paper did not demonstrate that I understood the course objectives.

I then wrote an appropriate paper and submitted it to Dr. Wright. After demonstrating that I could write a paper that fulfilled the requirements of the class, I received a passing grade. I would continue to work with Dr. Wright as a graduate student at Michigan State University and owe much to his valuable guidance.

The course syllabus includes important information about the expectations for your research paper. Some instructors spell out their requirements in explicit detail. Others provide only general information which they supplement with class instruction.

In reviewing your syllabus, you should consult not only the assignments and grading section of the syllabus, but also the sections that apply to faculty/student responsibilities and deadlines.

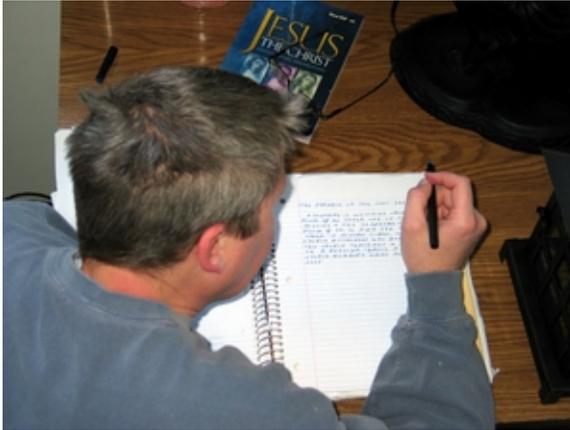
Assignment

In your own words, briefly summarize the research expectations and quality standards spelled out in your syllabus.

² Justin Morrill College was a liberal arts residence college at Michigan State University. Attending JMC was like attending a community college housed in the center of a major research university.



Selecting a Topic



Selecting a topic can be the most difficult part of the research process; especially if the subject is new to you. Not only do you have to come up with an idea, but that idea must fit the limitations your instructor has placed on the assignment.

When you select your topic, you need to make sure that your topic fits the requirements of the assignment and that you can access the necessary research materials during the time you have to write it.

On-Line Resources

This workbook, in part, is designed as a gateway to on-line resources. If you go to the following website, you will find links to specific learning activities designed to help you get ideas for your research paper.

- Select the Topic
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step02.html>

Suggestion for Success

In selecting your research topic, try to find something that you value; a topic that interests you and can sustain your interest during the semester.

Even if you do not particularly care about a subject, don't just pick the first topic that comes into your head. Instead, ask yourself ways in which you can make the topic interesting to you.

Pick a Topic that Interests You

I often have students tell me that they just can't think of a topic and want me to give one to them. One of my favorite suggestions for ancient world history is:

- Starting with the *Satipatthana Sutta*, describe the benefits of meditating in charnel grounds.

While I spent much of one summer studying the *Satipatthana Sutta*, is this really how you want to spend your semester?



Student Name: _____



Brainstorming Ideas

Often, the first idea for a research project is not the best topic you could have selected. Rather than rush into a decision, you should spend some time brainstorming potential topics. As you do your brainstorming, write down any potential topic that comes to mind. Don't try to analyze whether or not it is an acceptable topic; just list it.

After you have finished brainstorming, you can go over your list and evaluate whether the various topics fit the course assignment.

On-line Resources

More information on brainstorming can be found at the following web site:

- Brainstorming Techniques
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/mini/m003.html>
- Creating a Mind Map
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h029.html>

Assignment

Come up with a list of 20 potential topics for your research paper.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

--Continue your list on the back of this worksheet.



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Wikipedia Worksheet

General Research Topic:

Wikipedia—and other encyclopedias—are not academic sources and it is not appropriate to cite them in academic research. However, there is an important role that Wikipedia can play in the research process.

Wikipedia can be a great starting point for a research topic about which you know little. As with other encyclopedias, it provides a quick overview of the issues that you might want to explore.

Reading an article in Wikipedia can also help give you ideas for a research project if you decide to explore in detail something that is briefly mentioned in the article.

Furthermore, the notes and references in a Wikipedia entry can guide you to useful sources for your research.

Assignment

First, put the general topic of your research in the box above.

Then, go to <http://www.wikipedia.org/> and do a search to find a Wikipedia article on your topic.

After you have read the article, list topics covered in the article about which you would like to learn more.

List those topics below. If necessary, you can continue your list on the back of this worksheet.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



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Alexa the Friendly Librarian

General Research Topic:



One day, I invited Professor Alexa Azzopardi to give a presentation in a class I was teaching. My students “knew” that any day when the librarian visited was going to be a dull day. What they ended up with was an exciting game of *Stump the Librarian* where they were given the opportunity to ask Professor Azzopardi difficult research questions.

Once a question was asked, Professor Azzopardi would conduct a variety of on-line and database searches to find the answer; searches which we projected on a screen in the front of the room.

I had offered a prize of 25 cents to anyone who could ask a question which Professor Azzopardi could not answer. Although the students tried hard to win the quarter, Professor Azzopardi could not be stumped. After all, she is a reference librarian and therefore knows everything. And what she does not know, she knows how to find.

Make friends with a reference librarian as you begin your research paper—when you are still trying to get ideas—and continue working with him/her throughout the semester.

Assignment

After discussing your research topic with a reference librarian, please summarize the results of your conversation below. Be sure to include the name of the librarian with whom you met as well as specific examples about what you discussed.



Taking Research Notes



When it comes time to write your paper, all of the research in the world is useless to you unless it is organized. By establishing an organizational system before you begin your research, you will save yourself time and unnecessary frustration.

Taking Research Notes is an on-line tutorial I developed. This tutorial is designed to help you learn how to take effective notes while preparing to write a research paper.

By taking the tutorial, you will learn:

- the importance of a bibliographic note card.
- the skills necessary for making sure you know from what source your notes were taken.
- how file folders and databases can be used in note taking.
- some specific strategies to avoid plagiarism.

Taking Research Notes is available at <http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/research-notes>.

Suggestion for Success

According to Robert A. Harris writing in his *Using Sources Effectively*, “A substantial amount of plagiarism is committed unintentionally, simply because the writer did not know the rules or forms of citation. Yet the penalty for such behavior is often severe because plagiarism is considered one of the most serious forms of academic dishonesty.” By taking clear research notes, you avoid the possibility of accidentally plagiarizing another author’s work.

Because an author is ultimately responsible for the veracity of his/her work, accidental plagiarism can still be grounds for failing a course or other disciplinary action.

If you write out a Bibliography Card that includes all of the information you need for a proper citation, you can make sure that you do not accidentally plagiarize.

Harris, Robert. Using Sources Effectively: Strengthening Your Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism. Los Angeles, CA: Pyncebook Publishing, 2002.



Three Common Types of Accidental Plagiarism (Which Good Research Notes Help You Avoid)

Word-for-Word Plagiarism

You commit word-for-word plagiarism if you take the exact words from a book, article, Internet site, or some other source without putting quote marks around the words you copied. Even if you take only a unique short phrase of as few as two words from another author, you could be guilty of word-for-word plagiarism. On your note cards, make sure that you put quotation marks around any text you take from an author. My personal recommendation is that if you use more than three words in a row, you need quotation marks.

Plagiarism by Paraphrase

You commit plagiarism by paraphrase when you take and put another author's writing into your own words without giving him/her proper credit. It is generally a good idea to paraphrase an author's work as you take your research notes. But make sure you have all the necessary information so that you can give the author credit when you use your paraphrase in your research paper.

Mosaic Plagiarism

You commit mosaic plagiarism when you take a series of short passages or phrases from the works of another author or authors and string them together without citing the other author(s) and putting quote marks around the words that are exactly the same. A sign of good scholarship is the ability to make connections between several different authors. Because it is impressive, be sure to cite all of the authors whose work you use.

On-Line Resources

Please remember that this workbook is designed so that the on-line resources lead you to additional resources on the topic.

Taking Research Notes

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/research-notes>

Three Common Types of Accidental Plagiarism

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h005.html>

Writing a Proper Citation

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/citations/index.html>



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Student Name: _____



Learning the rules of documentation is difficult. I often schedule days where I work with students on their research.

Research Topic:

Avoiding Plagiarism: Courtesy, Credibility, and Credit

Courtesy

It is an act of courtesy to thank an author whose thoughts, words, or ideas you used in your paper. A proper citation is the way you say "thank you" in an academic paper.

A proper citation is also an act of courtesy to your readers because it allows them to easily locate your reference if they want more information.

Credibility

Proper citations establish your credibility because they demonstrate the extent of your research as well as the quality of the materials on which you are basis your thesis.

Credit

Giving credit to others by using a proper citation is a requirement for academic integrity. If you do not give credit, you are guilty of plagiarism. If you are guilty of plagiarism because you do not give credit to your sources, you could fail the course or even be expelled from college.

Assignment

Complete this assignment using the information found in

- Writing a Proper Citation
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/citations/>

Find one book and one Internet site (other than an encyclopedia) about your research topic. Then prepare a proper citation for them. You can write the citation on the back of this page.



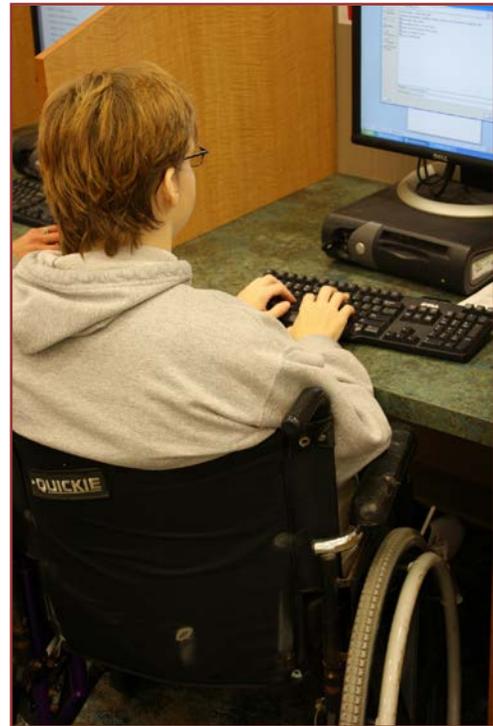
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Conducting Your Research

Frequently students who know how to do research—especially when they have done well on their high school papers—are shocked when they do not do well on a college paper. The problem is that the expectations of college level writing and high school level writing are different. As we advance in our educational development, the rules change and more is expected of us.

For example, I would not argue that it is inappropriate for high school teachers to accept citations to *World Book Encyclopedia*, *Wikipedia*, or other encyclopedias from their high school students. At the college level, there are ways to appropriately use encyclopedias. However, citing them in your paper is not one of them.



Another difference is that you generally have more resources available to you at the college level than you do in your high school classes. For example, most high schools do not have the financial resources to subscribe to electronic databases; an important research tool that colleges have.

In this section, I will briefly summarize the following research strategies.

- Academic Journals
- Books
- Google Books
- Internet
- Interviews
- Newspapers
- Lectures/Speeches/Presentations
- Government Publications
- Special Collections
- Wikipedia
- You Tube
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Social Media



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More detailed explanations of these strategies as well as other explanatory links about them can be found at

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step04.html>

Research Strategies

Academic Journals

Articles from peer reviewed journals are considered to be the most credible publications. You should be sure to consult peer reviewed journals and cite articles published in them, as part of your final paper.

Library databases can often be accessed from home. However, passwords are typically required.³

Strategy for Success

Because they are so easy to use and because faculty members are so impressed when they see high quality research, I think it is foolish for students to not take the time to use the electronic databases their college provides.

Books

Most people believe that they must go to the library in order to find out what books are available in the library, but this is not the case. You can search the college library on-line as well as the libraries from many community libraries. Books can also be searched using the “Look Inside” feature developed by Amazon.com.

Google Books

Google has scanned more than 30,000,000 books which they make available in an on-line database. Many of the books—especially those published before 1930—can be downloaded to your personal computer.

Internet

One of the great benefits of the Internet is that it is easy to access using Google or some other search engine. You also need to be aware that just because you find information on-line, your source may not be credible—even if the information is true.⁴

³ As part of class instruction, I provide the passwords for Schoolcraft College’s databases to my students. Unfortunately, because of licensing restrictions, I cannot legally publish these passwords as part of this workbook or in the on-line materials that accompany it.

⁴ Credibility of sources is in another section of this workbook.



Interviews

As you begin your research, consider individuals with whom you could discuss your project. Some of them might be members of the faculty or people in the community. You might also try to interview the authors or articles, books, or web sites you consulted. Or someone in your class might suggest a person they know who knows something about your topic. Interviews can also be conducted via e-mail. E-mail addresses can often be found through an on-line search. Authors frequently have Facebook pages that allow you to contact them.

Newspapers

Newspapers can serve as a rich source of both historical and contemporary information. If you consult newspapers as part of your overall research strategy, you can add a unique flavor to your writing; a flavor that is certain to impress your instructor when used appropriately. A reference librarian can help you access newspaper databases in the college library.

Lectures/Speeches/Presentations

Attending a lecture, speech, or presentation on your subject can be an enjoyable way to do research. You can check local events calendars in newspapers, community organizations, and area colleges and universities to see what might be available.

Government Publications

Government documents are a valuable source of statistical information or to locate the results of federally funded studies. Congressional reports and publications of various agencies are also useful. Some libraries are specially designated to house such documents. In the Internet age, many government publications are available on-line.



Many people do not realize that, in addition to being excellent at helping students with general advice, reference librarians also specialize in various subjects. For example, Professor Diane Nesbit at Schoolcraft College is responsible for the Government Publications.

When you visit your college library, ask if there is a librarian who specializes in your subject or on the types of materials you require.

Regardless of your topic, find out which librarian might have special training in your area of study.



Special Collections

Many libraries house special collections of rare and/or unpublished materials that you can only access by traveling to the library. Often, special collections are in "closed stacks." This means that you are not given direct access to the materials. Instead, you tell the librarian what you desire and he or she gets it for you. Other restrictions might also apply to special collections: pencils only, no back packs, et cetera.

Wikipedia

When used appropriately, Wikipedia—and other encyclopedias—can be an excellent starting point for your research. However, encyclopedias are only a starting point and cannot be considered appropriate academic sources to cite in your research paper.

YouTube

Among the videos of people acting stupid, you can also find many quality videos on YouTube; videos that might help you gain insights into your research. Search YouTube by key word and see what turns up.

Facebook

"Find Us On Facebook" is not just for businesses. There are many Facebook groups formed by people interested in a variety of topics; some of which might be relevant to your research.

Twitter

By establishing a Twitter account, you can follow individuals whom have expertise in your topic.

Social Media

Besides Facebook and Twitter, other forms of social media allow you to interact with individuals who share your interests or who have expertise in the area in which you conduct your research.



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Suggestion for Success

Why spend time doing research that someone has already done? When you do an Internet search, add “bibliography” or “webliography” as a search term with your subject appropriate search terms. However, don’t use both terms in the same search.

For example, if you were doing a paper on some aspect of health care such as substance abuse among college students, you might use the following terms for your Google search: “substance abuse’ webliography college” or “alcohol bibliography college student”.

Bibliographies and webliographies are lists of resources on a specific topic.

On-Line Resources

- Conduct Your Research
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step04.html>
(This resource is the one you use to get more detailed information about the research strategies discussed in this section.)
- Compiling an Annotated Bibliography
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/annotated-bibliography>
- Utilizing Schoolcraft College’s On-line Databases
(Even if you do not attend Schoolcraft College, this resource will give general strategies about using databases; strategies you can use with the databases found at your own college.)
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h033.html>



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Student Name: _____



Research Topic:

Individuals such as Professor Wayne Pricer are fairly weird in their research interests. Most people cannot understand the excitement of compiling lists of resources; something that Professor Pricer does well. However, as the author of three annotated bibliographies, I understand this excitement. And as someone who uses bibliographies and weblibliographies, I am well aware of the valuable service which Professor Pricer and other weblibliographers and bibliographers provide.

Professor Pricer's weblibliographies are published at :

<http://schoolcraft.edu/department-areas/learning-support-services/library/resources/weblibliography#.UeBAdW3pXII>

Locating Weblibliographies and Bibliographies

Assignment

This assignment asks you to conduct four Internet searches.

1. Has Professor written a weblibliography relevant to your topic? Please print out the first page of the weblibliography. If he has not published a relevant weblibliography for your topic, you may print out the first page of Professor Pricer's list of weblibliographies.
2. Using Google or some other browser, conduct a search using your research topic and "weblibliography" as search terms. Print out the first page of an Internet site that includes a relevant weblibliography. If no weblibliography is available on-line, print out the first page of the results of your search.
3. Using Google or some other browser, conduct a search using your research topic and "bibliography" as search terms. Print out the first page of an Internet site that includes a relevant bibliography. If no bibliography is available on-line, print out the first page of the results of your search.
4. Conduct a search of Amazon.com (<http://www.amazon.com>) using your research topic and "bibliography" as search terms. Print out the first page of one of the books you locate. If no relevant book exists, print out the first page of the results of your search.

Please staple the results of your four searches to this worksheet.



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Student Name: _____

Research Topic:

Academic Journals

A common problem students make when writing research papers is that they rely too heavily on the Internet to find resources. While there are many high quality web pages available, the best research papers include material from a variety of sources. Articles published in academic journals are especially important. Such articles do not generally appear when you search the Internet using Google or some other search engine.

Assignment

Meet with one of the college reference librarians to go over your research topic. Although you should be sure to ask about the databases where you can find peer reviewed articles, you should also ask about other databases which might be relevant to your research.

- On the back of this worksheet, please provide a summary of your conversation with the reference librarian. Be sure to include his/her name in your summary.
- Find five peer reviewed articles related to your topic. These articles must have been published in scholarly journals. Please staple the first page of each of these articles to this worksheet.⁵

⁵ If you cannot find five relevant articles, please provide documentation of your search strategy. You can do this by printing out the first page of the results of any searches you did.



Student Name: _____



When Jeffrey Zaslow, co-author of *The Last Lecture* visited Schoolcraft College as part of a Page Turners' event, I took my students even though his presentation "had nothing to do with the class."

As someone who is good with language, I can easily come up with justifications for any activity to which I take my students. However, I no longer try. Being exposed to outstanding speakers—whether or not they are directly covering the topic of our specific research—is valuable in its own right.

After the presentation, several students were disappointed that his books had sold out. They then rushed to the bookstore across the street to buy copies for him to sign.

Lectures/Presentations

When attending a lecture or presentation, we learn more than the specific subject matter. We can learn about presentation techniques, research strategies, and so forth.

Even a bad presentation can be a valuable learning tool. Once, my class attended a very poor presentation. At the next class session, we spent time discussing what not to do in front of an audience.

Assignment

Attend a presentation or lecture sponsored by a campus group.

1. Provide a summary of the presentation.
2. Then reflect on what you learned during the presentation will make you a better scholar. (Please note: The second part of this assignment is not asking you about the specific academic content of what you heard.)



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Google Books

Google has scanned more than 30,000,000 books of which several will likely relate to your research—even if it is just to give an historical perspective of your topic.

For this assignment, you should

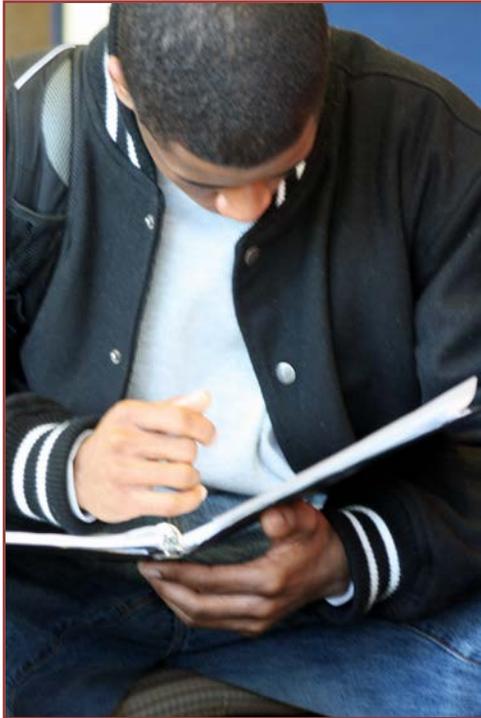
1. Review the handout “Directions for Using Google Books”
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h036.html>
2. Do a Google search to locate three books relevant to your topic. The entire content of the book—not just a snippet—should be available either on-line or to download.
3. Print out the title page of each book. On the bottom of this sheet or on the print out, provide a brief description as to how you could use the book in your research.



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Evaluating Your Research



A quality paper cites quality sources. If your sources are substandard, the quality of your paper will be mediocre at best. Furthermore, just because something is in print does not make it true.

Judging whether or not a source is credible is particularly difficult for someone who is new to an academic topic; someone who does not have a broad base of knowledge about the topic to apply to the newly found information.

In this section of the workbook, I will briefly present a variety of issues to consider when evaluating books, articles, other print sources, and web sites.

More detailed explanations of these issues can be found at

<http://writing.stevenlberg.info/research/step05.html>

Issues to Consider When Evaluating Sources

Author

Credentials, Reputation, Bias

When considering an author's credibility, you need to consider his/her education, work experience, professional affiliations, and previous publications. You can judge an author's reputation by reading reviews about the work, determining if he/she has won any prizes or awards, and finding out if other people are citing their materials. All authors write from a point-of-view and therefore write from a bias.

Publisher

Reputation, Bias

Publishers specialize in the types of materials they publish. It is the decisions about what they publish that give them their reputation. These decisions also produce a bias we need to consider.



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Date of Publication

There is no magic number of years you can use to judge whether or not a source is current and whether the material found in it is still accurate. Scientific and medical publications lose their currency quickly. Publications in the liberal arts often have a longer period where they remain credible.

Research Methodology

Even if an author accurately reports the results of his or her research, the conclusions might not be valid. A poorly constructed research project will produce invalid results.

Bibliography/Footnotes

The most credible sources provide quality references to support their assertions.

Author's Preface/Introduction

By reading the preface and introduction, you can often learn about the methodology employed in the research, any bias the author is introducing into the text, upon whose work the author is building, and who has influenced the author.

Table of Contents/Headers

Glance down the table of contents in a book or the headings in an article. Your better quality publications will tend to have clear, straightforward titles and headers that make it easy for you to locate information in the publication.

Endorsements

Many books include endorsements on the cover. The content of the endorsements and the credibility of the persons who wrote them can help you judge the credibility of the book itself.

Use of Fiction in Research

Some individuals might mistakenly think that you can only use fiction as evidence when writing about literature. However, fiction can sometimes be used to illustrate points in research in other disciplines.



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A Special Note Concerning Websites

Websites, like books, have authors, publishers, and dates of publication. They also have the ability to cite sources.

If a website does not list when it was last updated, does not provide the name of the author, does not provide information about the publisher, and does not cite sources, you should not consider it to be a reputable website.

Suggestion for Success

Because an author's peers have already vetted the article for credibility, you don't have to work hard to evaluate articles published in scholarly journals. You just need to recognize that the article appeared in such a journal.

Because peer reviewed journals are easy to find in your college's on-line databases, make sure to search those databases and use peer-reviewed articles as sources in your research paper.



On-Line Resources

- Evaluate Your Research
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step05.html>
- Compiling an Annotated Bibliography
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h033.html>
- Utilizing Schoolcraft College's On-line Databases
(Even if you do not attend Schoolcraft College, this resource will give general strategies about using databases; strategies you can use with the databases found at your own college.)
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h037.html>



Student Name: _____



Research Topic:

Create a Working Bibliography

When you write your research paper, you will have to include a list of Works Cited. The Works Cited list includes only those resources you actually cite in your paper.

A Working Bibliography is a list of *quality* resources which you might cite in your paper. It is a good idea to annotate your sources as you create your working bibliography. This means you will include a brief summary of each of your sources.

On-Line Resources

To complete this worksheet, you will want to consult:

- Compiling an Annotated Bibliography
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h033.html>
- Summarizing an Article
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h034.html>
- Writing a Proper Citation
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/citations/index.html>

Assignment

Compile an annotated bibliography of the quality resources you have found while doing your research. Please type your resource list using proper MLA or APA format. Please attach your bibliography to this worksheet when you submit it.

Suggestion for Success

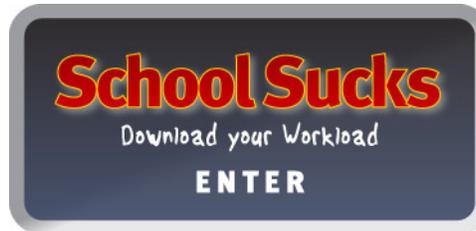
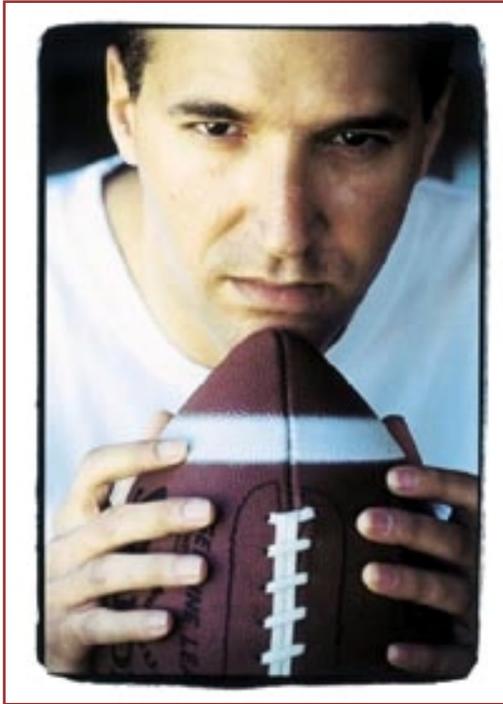
After you have compiled your working bibliography, show it to one of the reference librarians. Ask them to review it and offer suggestions as to where you could find additional sources.



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Student Name: _____



"We have a message that we want to get out there -- that the education systems of the world need reforming. The *Houston Chronicle* article⁶ is especially revealing - a professor writes to other educators that the best way to avoid problems with sites like School Sucks is to give original, structured and creative assignments. In other words, the best way to deal with School Sucks is to be a better teacher. I like that and hope this site helps teachers and students."⁷

--Kenny Sahr

Founder of SchoolSucks.com

Some might question the wisdom of your instructor providing you with directions on how to find Internet paper mills. However, I am sure that most students are well aware of SchoolSucks.com as well as many of the over 250 paper mill sites identified by Peggy Bates and Margaret Fain.⁸ Besides, I have always admired the challenge that Kenny Sahr makes to faculty on how to deal with websites such as the one he created in 1996. In fact, I am in full agreement with his thesis and find it sad that more faculty members have not met his challenge by developing more "original, structured, and creative assignments."

Assignment

Locate a free research paper found at SchoolSucks.com or from one of the other paper mills sites identified by Bates and Fain. Evaluate the quality of the research used in the paper.

Please attach your analysis and a copy of the paper to this worksheet.

⁶ Galles, Gary M. "Copy These Strategies to Stop Plagiarism by Students." *The Houston Chronicle*. 28 Sept. 1997. Web.

⁷ "In the Press." *Content and Ads*. nd. 4 July 2009. <<http://www.contentandads.com/press/>> Web.

⁸ Bates, Peggy and Margaret Fain. "Cheating 101: Internet Paper Mills." *Kimbel Library Presentations*. 23 Mar 2009. Coastal Carolina University. 4 July 2009. Web.



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Stalking Dr. Sunshine

I have frequently taught materials written by Dr. Glenn Sunshine, Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University; including work he has done on worldviews.

One way I have developed to help students understand the importance of an author's worldview/bias in writing, I ask them to "stalk Dr. Sunshine." To do this, they conduct Internet research to find out as much about him as possible. This way, they are able to better appreciate the approach he takes to his writing and research.

Pre-Assignment Exercise

1. Watch Dr. Sunshine's "Glenn S. Sunshine—What Is a Worldview?"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaOgr71gmTE>
2. "Glenn S. Sunshine—What is a Worldview" was published by Zondervan Publishers. What is Zondervan's worldview? (You will have to conduct some research to find out this answer. Hint: Locate their website and see what you find.)

Assignment Exercise

Choose the author of a book, journal article, or quality website that is relevant to your research. Stalk the author and then write a short biographical sketch about him/her. Next, stalk the publisher and then describe their worldview.



Promoting Academic Integrity

My bias is that it is far better to promote integrity than it is to catch people who cheat.

Unfortunately, it is possible for students to accidentally commit plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty because they do not know the rules or because they have done sloppy research. Therefore, I work closely with students as they develop their research projects and teach them how to find quality information and how to properly document their research.

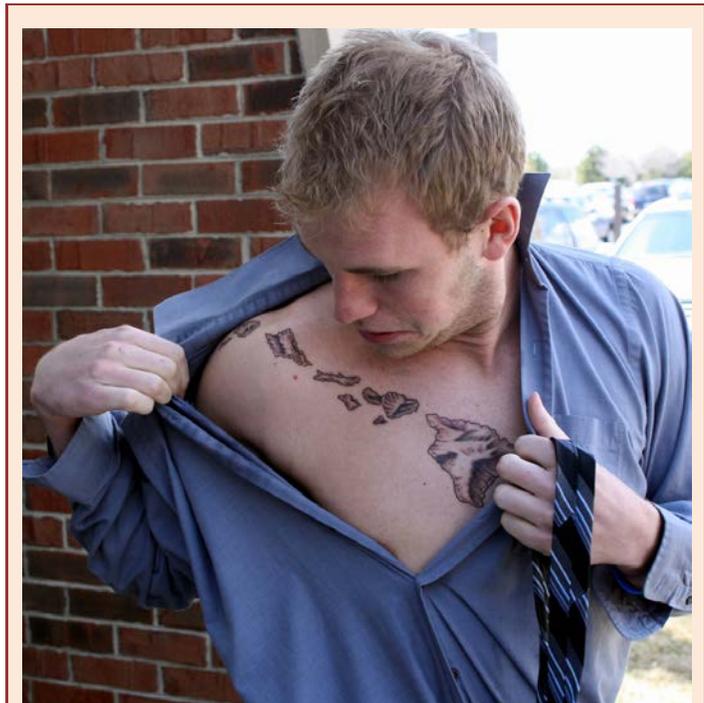
Although I am including a section on “Avoiding Academic Dishonesty” as part of this workbook, I know that to be effective, tips about how to avoid plagiarism and to learn the expectations of college level research must be integrated throughout the course; something that the worksheets in the *Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper* attempt to do.

Suggestion for Success

Some students use cheating as a strategy to get through their college careers. There is little that professors can do to assist such students who lack personal integrity. We can only do our best to catch and punish them.

However, we know that honest students will sometimes cheat because they have waited too long to begin their research papers. Confronted with the prospect of failing a major assignment, they will go against their moral core and commit plagiarism.

Don't set yourself up to be in such a situation where you might contemplate cheating. Begin your research early and work on it throughout the semester.

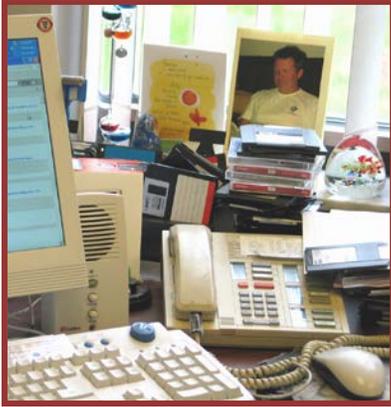


Tattooing maps of Hawaii or other types of information on your body as a strategy to pass a class would be an extreme form of academic dishonesty. Furthermore, if you begin to disrobe during class, you will likely catch the attention of your professor.



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Integrity Resources On-Line

I have designed an *Integrity Resources* web site that serves as a portal to excellent materials on avoiding plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. It provides links to on-line resources students can use to learn the expectation for producing academically honest research papers and other projects.

However, I believe that faculty members also have to take responsibility for insuring student success. There is much we can do to promote integrity as we design assignments. To this end, I have created two tutorials to teach faculty members how to plagiarize proof specific assignments and to promote academic integrity at the classroom level.

- Integrity Resources
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/integrity.html>

Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Quiz

One of my favorite activities is the Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Quiz. It is fun because it is designed to provoke thought and, in part, teach through humor. Generally, I will use this quiz as part of a group activity in class, but individuals can learn from the on-line version.

- Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Quiz
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/worksheets/w022.html>

On-Line Resources

- Integrity Resources
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/integrity.html>
- Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Quiz
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/worksheets/w022.html>



Drafting Your Paper

As you begin to write your paper, you should first review your notes. Doing so, you will re-fresh your memory about the materials you had found during your research.

A formal outline can be difficult and time consuming to write and for some individuals might not be necessary. But taking the time to do an outline will give structure to your paper and often makes the writing go easier.

For many people, writing the opening paragraph of a research paper is the hardest part of the writing process. However, if you take time to write a good opening paragraph, it will be easier to draft the rest of your paper.



When you are writing your first draft, you should not be overly concerned with structure, support, grammar, and so forth. Instead, you should write quickly getting all of your thoughts down on paper. After finishing the first draft, you can concentrate on organizational issues as you prepare your second draft.

Too often, students believe that the only way to incorporate sources into their research papers is to use direct quotes. However, this is often the worse strategy you can use. Direct quotes have their place in a research paper, but summarizing and paraphrasing are generally superior techniques.

The conclusion of your paper should summarize your main points. Be sure not to introduce any new material into the concluding paragraph.

Core Skills Writing Rubric

The Core Skills Writing Rubric developed by the faculty at Schoolcraft College will provide you with a general guideline as to what professors consider when evaluating a research paper.

- Core Skills Writing Rubric
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/core/index.html>



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Proper Formats

Part of writing a research paper is following the correct formats established by your academic discipline and your professor. Many years ago, I submitted an article to a journal. It was promptly rejected simply because it was written in MLA format instead of the APA style that the journal required.

I am sure that the editor did not bother to read the article I had submitted. Instead, he rightly took the position that if I were so ignorant not to understand such a basic requirement, he could not trust the credibility of what I had written. After all, from the first glance at my paper, I had shown myself to be a sloppy scholar. So why bother with the rest of it?

Suggestion for Success

After reviewing your research notes, write the first draft of your paper without looking at them. Then, as you prepare the second draft, you can add appropriate citations. This will help you avoid some common problems which instructors identify in student papers; especially having too many quotations and inappropriate paraphrasing.

On-Line Resources

- Draft Your Paper
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step06.html>
- Three Common Types of “Accidental” Plagiarism
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h005.html>
- Basic MLA Format
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/mla>
- Writing a Proper Citation
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/citations/index.html>
- Core Skills Writing Rubric
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/core/index.html>





Getting Feedback

Ideally, after you have done the first draft of your paper, you should be able to set it aside for a couple of days before writing your second draft.

Once your second draft is completed, it is time to get feedback before beginning your final set of revisions. There are a number of sources, briefly explained here, that you can use to get feedback on your paper.

Faculty

As part of the class, don't be surprised if your instructor requires you to submit the draft of your paper for evaluation. Even if this is not a required part of the course, you can still ask your instructor to review your manuscript and to give you feedback before you have to submit the final version of your research paper.

Friends

Friends can be great peer editors; especially if they have previously written a research paper. You might also form a work group with other students in the class. Your colleagues in the class can read your paper to give you feedback on what works in your manuscript as well as suggestions for improvement.

Relatives

If you decide to use a relative as a peer editor, you need to be sure that the individual you choose is able to point out strong points in your paper as well as to give constructive suggestions for improvement. And you need to make sure that you will not get too emotionally upset if the person does offer suggestions.

College Sponsored Writing Assistance

The college at which I teach has a program called Writing Fellows. Writing Fellows are students whom have received specialized training in order to assist other students with written assignments. Although the Writing Fellows Program is unique to Schoolcraft College, most colleges have some sort of writing program designed to help students.



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Suggestion for Success

Too often, students do not see the value of getting feedback—even from their instructor. Get feedback and then use it for doing revisions.

On-Line Resources

- Get Feedback
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step07.html>
- Verify References
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/handouts/h032.html>

Peer Editing As A Strategy To Prevent Plagiarism

Ashworth and Bannister⁹ found that “some students have a fear that they might well plagiarize unwittingly in writing what they genuinely take to be their own ideas.” This fear could come from the fact that many students are unclear on the concept of plagiarism.¹⁰

In addition to double checking your references *against the original sources* and not just against your notes, ask a friend to verify your references for you.



⁹ Ashworth, Peter, and Philip Bannister. "Guilty in Whose Eyes? University Student's Perceptions of Cheating and Plagiarism in Academic Work and Assessment." *Studies in Higher Education* 22.2 (1997): 187+. Academic Search Premiere. 3 Nov 2007.

¹⁰ Thompson, Leonora C., and Portia G. Williams. "But I Changed Three Words!" *Clearing House* 69.1 (1995): 27+. Academic Search Premiere. 3 Nov 2007. Lathrop, Ann, and Kathleen Foss. *Student Cheating and Plagiarism in the Internet Era*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 2000. Academic Search Premiere. 3 Nov 2007.



Student Name: _____



In a study by Love and Simmons,¹¹ “One student differentiated cheating from plagiarism when she indicated that ‘People know when they are cheating, but might not know when they are plagiarizing.’” Unfortunately, even careful students report fears that they could be accidentally plagiarizing a passage because they are unsure of the conventions of documentation.

Fortunately, peer editing is one of the ways you can get reassurance that you are, in fact, documenting your sources correctly. And, in the unlikely event that you are making a documentation error, your colleague can help you correct the problem.

Peer Evaluation

While completing this assignment, you will come to a better understanding of what is expected for a quality paper. And, you will gain valuable feedback about your own manuscript.

Assignment

Step 1: Read Colleague’s Paper

Quickly read the paper without taking any notes or making any marks on it.

Step 2: Re-read the Paper

Re-read your colleague’s paper. But this time, read with pen or pencil in hand. Make marginal notes about sections you find to be impressive as well as suggestions for improvement.

Step 3: Core Skills Writing Rubric

Complete the Core Skills Writing Rubric for your colleague’s paper:

<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/core/index.html>

Step 4: Verify References

Verify all of your colleague’s references. Don’t hesitate to express your fears about unintentional plagiarism.

Step 5: Give Feedback

Discuss the paper with your colleague. You should also provide him/her with a copy of your analysis. Then, attach a copy of the paper you analyzed to this worksheet and then submit it to me.

¹¹ Love, Patrick and Janice Simmons. “Factors Influencing Cheating and Plagiarism Among Graduate Students in a College of Education.” *College Student Journal* 32.4 (1998): 539+. *Academic Search Premiere*. 3 Nov 2007.



Student Name: _____

Writing Fellows

“Writing Fellows are committed to helping under-prepared writers prepare, prepared writers advance, and advanced writers excel.”

For more information about Writing Fellows, please go to

- http://www.schoolcraft.edu/department-areas/learning-support-services/learning-assistance-center/tutoring/writing-fellows#.UeBNz3bD_IU

Assignment

Visit a Writing Fellow *in person*. For the purposes of this assignment, you may not use the Writing Fellows’ on-line service.

On the back of this sheet, please summarize the major points which the Writing Fellow made concerning your paper. Include both what the Writing Fellow thought worked well as well as any suggestions for improvement. Please be sure to include the name of the Writing Fellow in your summary.

At the conclusion of your visit to the Writing Fellow, she/he will provide you with a confirmation sheet you can give to your instructor. Please staple that confirmation to this worksheet.



Not a Schoolcraft College Student?

Although you must be a Schoolcraft College student to use Writing Fellows, most colleges have developed writing programs, centers, and so forth to assist their students. Your college’s operator should be able to direct you to the correct office for more information.



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Feedback from Faculty

Faculty members take various approaches to giving feedback. Sometimes, they simply assign a paper that is due on a certain day. It is then up to the students who desire feedback to contact the faculty member for an appointment.

Other professors will take a manuscript and correct every possible error. And other faculty members give the student more general advice.

Suggestion for Success

If you are not satisfied with the type of feedback your professor gives to you, take the initiative to set up a conference with her/him. When scheduling the conference, take the tone that you have questions about the advice you had received. Don't tell the professor that she wasn't doing her job or that his advice "sucked."

Assignment

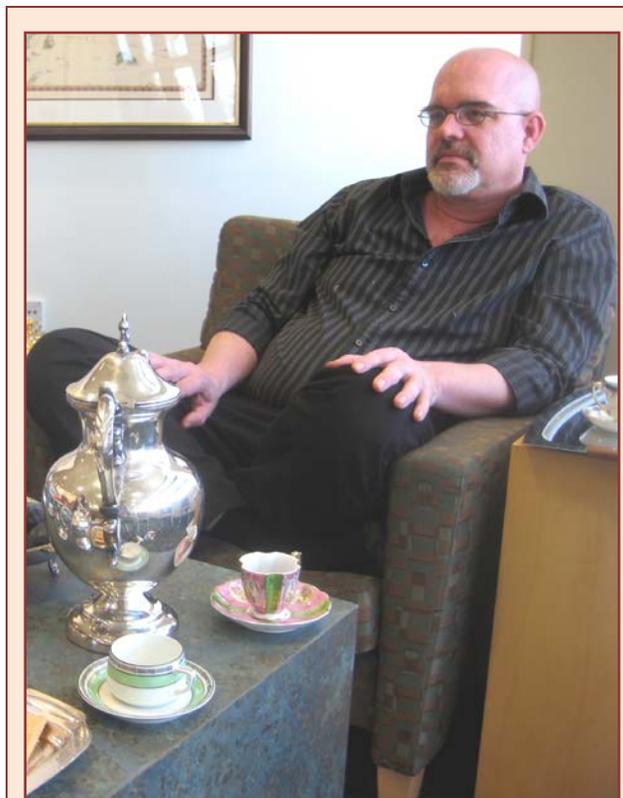
Submit a copy of your research paper to me using this worksheet as the "cover page."

With your paper, you must also include a completed copy of the Core Skills Writing Rubric which you completed concerning your own paper. You may get a copy of the rubric at:

- Core Skills Writing Rubric
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/core/index.html>

You should also include a sheet in which you have typed out your answers to the following questions.

1. What is the thesis of your paper? (e.g. What is your main point or argument?)
2. What is the strongest section(s) of your paper? Explain.
3. What part of the paper is the most in need of improvement? Explain.
4. What questions do you have for me concerning the steps to take to improve your paper?



Please note, I come from the school of thought that we never finish a manuscript. We just pick a point to stop writing. Therefore, if you take the position that there is no room for improvement in your manuscript, I will know that you are ignorant about the writing/research/revision process.





Revising Your Paper

Once you have received feedback about your paper, your task is to evaluate the comments you received and to make appropriate changes to your paper.

Evaluate Comments

You need to evaluate the comments from the people whom you consulted about your paper because not all suggestions for improvement are good ones to implement. Sometimes, your editor will misread a passage. Or your editor might prefer that you wrote a different paper or had a different thesis than the one you chose. Others are ignorant about specific rules of grammar or structure and suggest you make changes that go against contemporary acceptable practices.

You might also find that two editors disagree on the quality of a passage. One might tell you that a specific example is great while the other one might suggest that a good way to improve your paper would be to change the example. As the author of the paper, you will need to decide which editor has given the best advice.



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Make Appropriate Changes

Once you have decided on which suggestions for improvement are good ones to follow, it is time to make the necessary changes in your paper. As part of the revision process, you might need to do some additional research or re-write entire sections of the paper. Such significant changes are not uncommon—even among professional writers.

Read Paper Out Loud to Yourself

When we silently read our own writing, we have a tendency to read what is supposed to be in the paper instead of what we have actually written. Therefore, reading your paper out loud to yourself is a good strategy to use during the revision process. Often, you will be able to hear awkward passages that you cannot see while silently reading. Also, reading out loud slows you down which allows you to identify incorrect word choice, spelling errors, missing words, and grammar errors.

Repeat “Getting Feedback”

As you revise your paper you need to continue getting feedback on your revisions; feedback that will likely result in more revision.

Suggestion for Success

One of the most common problems I see among students is that they do not give themselves enough time for revision. After putting in time on your research and writing, don't give the revision process short shrift.

On-Line Resources

- Revise Your Paper
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step08.html>
- Get Feedback
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step07.html>



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Read Paper Aloud To a Colleague

When I was a graduate student, Dr. Victor Howard asked me to help him proof read a forthcoming book he had written. Although he was a distinguished professor with multiple publications, he did not trust himself to do the proof reading himself. Nor did he trust any one person to do the proof reading for him.

Dr. Howard and I would meet in a Morrill Hall conference room at Michigan State University. We each had a copy of the page proofs for his book. He read the book to me and I followed along silently. If either of noticed an error, Dr. Howard would make the necessary correction.



Assignment

1. Make two copies of the final version of your manuscript.
2. Meet with a colleague in the class or some other trusted friend.
3. Read your paper to him/her.
4. Note appropriate corrections.
Please note: When I worked with Dr. Howard, his manuscript was already in page proofs and we were simply copy editing. At this point in the research process, don't be satisfied with copy editing. Encourage your colleague to point out any passages that are confusing or questions she/he has about your paper.
5. Repeat the process by allowing your colleague to read his/her paper to you.
6. Write a brief reflection on the process. Please include information on how your colleague helped you. How were you able to help your colleague? Be sure to include your colleague's name in your reflection.
7. Attach your reflection to this worksheet and submit it to me.



Submitting Your Manuscript



Once you have finished revising your research paper, it is time to submit it for evaluation. However, before you submit it, double check your syllabus and other course materials to see if there are any special requirements. For example,

- some instructors want you to staple the paper in the upper left corner
- some want you to use a paper clip to secure the pages
- some want you to put your paper in a folder
- some want you to submit it electronically via e-mail
- some want you to submit your paper via a course management tool such as BlackBoard
- some want it included in your e-portfolio

Regardless of what your professor requests, be sure to follow all of the directions which have been given to you. Failure to follow your professor's directions could result in failure of the assignment. Failure could result even if what you did was perfectly acceptable in some other situation. For example, I often use different requirements in my research methods course and in my history courses. Often, within the same course, there are different requirements for various assignments.

Each semester, there are usually a couple of students who do not consult the materials I provide to them throughout the semester. Some will even search the Internet to get information on proper formatting instead of using the template I provide. These students are always shocked when they fail the assignment. Even though I usually permit such students to revise and re-submit their work, by not reviewing the directions I gave, they create additional work for themselves.



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Suggestion for Success

Be sure to keep a copy of your manuscript. My suggestion is that you keep both a paper copy as well as a copy on your computer or thumb drive. In addition, I encourage you to e-mail a copy of the paper to yourself so that you have yet another electronic version.

As I was drafting this portion of the *Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper*, I was also corresponding with a student who assures me that she submitted her paper to me on the last day of class; a paper that I cannot locate. However, because she wrote it in the library and didn't have her thumb drive handy, the copy she gave to me is the only copy of her paper. Unfortunately, if she is going to pass the course, it is her responsibility to produce the paper—even if she needs to re-write it.¹²

On-Line Resources

- Submit Paper for Evaluation
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/research/step09.html>

¹² It is not that I do not believe the student who claims she submitted her paper to me. I very well could have misplaced it. However, this student had not submitted the requested draft of her paper. Nor did she have any meetings with me throughout the semester. Had she done so, I would have been able to base her grade on the work I had seen. But, at some point, I must actually see some of her work. Furthermore, I had asked that she submit the final version of her paper both electronically via e-mail as well in paper copy.



Submitting Manuscript

Minimum Standards Checklist

Please put a check in front of each statement you can answer "Yes."

- _____ The paper is in proper APA or MLA format.
- _____ The paper incorporates peer reviewed articles published in scholarly journals. (If you were unable to find appropriate journal articles and have discussed this issue with me, you can check this statement.)
- _____ The paper is at least the minimum number of words for the assignment.

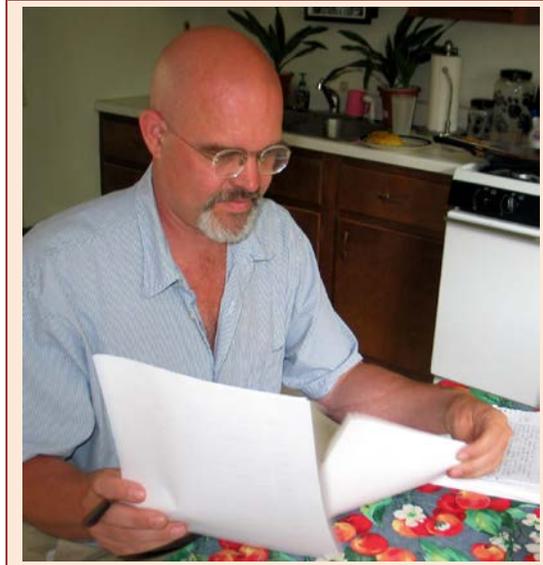
Unless you can appropriately answer "Yes" to all three statements, your paper will not be accepted and you will receive a 0.0 for the assignment.¹³

Suggestions for Success Checklist

- _____ After completing your final draft, you read your manuscript aloud to yourself.
- _____ You double checked all of your references.
- _____ You met with a Writing Fellow to go over your paper.

Submitting Your Paper

1. Please attach this worksheet to the front of your paper when you submit your manuscript to me.
2. Submit a copy of your paper to me via e-mail.



When I was in college, one of my professors rejected a perfectly good paper simply because I had strayed from the assigned topic. Even though he agreed that the paper I had submitted was of quality, I realized that he was correct in not accepting it for the course.

Unfortunately, I sometimes have to reject papers that do not meet certain standards. Just because a student submits a paper does not mean that the paper submitted is appropriate for the assignment. Nor does submitting a paper guarantee partial credit for the assignment.

A 0.0 does not mean "no work was done." A failing grade could mean that the work submitted was not appropriate for the assignment.

¹³ This criterion reflects how I teach my courses. Other faculty members will have other minimum standards.



Student Name: _____

Express Appreciation



Valery Przywara, a staff member for the Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network (MichUHCAN), helped many of my students with their research on the relationship between public policy and health care. A thank you note is the least students can do to express appreciation for the help she gave to them.

While working on your successful research paper, you had assistance from the reference librarians. It is also likely that others helped you.

Furthermore, as one of my early mentors, Dr. Herman Schornstein used to tell me, "Courtesy is always politically correct."

Assignment

Once you have received your final grade on your paper or in the course, send an e-mail or card to the people who helped you. Or drop a candy bar, piece of fruit, or some other small gift for the librarian or others who provided assistance.



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Student Name: _____



Celebration

While your professor sips tea and grades your paper, it is time for you to celebrate.

Assignment

Find an appropriate way to celebrate the successful completion of your research paper.

There is no need for you to write a reflection concerning your celebration nor do you need to submit any proof that you successfully completed this course requirement. (There are some things your professor just does not need to know.)



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Posters

“Poster sessions at conferences and university research fairs provide excellent opportunities for students to show off their work and to discuss their research in an informal setting. While it is important to present good work at a poster session, even the most outstanding research projects will receive little attention if they are not presented well.”¹⁴

The critical thinking, writing, and research skills you learn while writing a research paper will serve you well in your professional career. However, a formal research paper is not always the most effective way to present your research.

There is a cliché that instructs us that “A picture paints 1,000 words.” A poster is a picture of your research and in many circumstances can be an effective way of communicating information.

However, like a blurred image, a poorly constructed poster is not effective.

Elements of an Effective Poster

Title

The title of the poster should be easily identified and readable from four to six feet from your poster.



Cheryl Hawkins, Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences

After interacting with Cheryl Hawkins at various campus events, my students will often tell me that she asks tough questions. This is never a complaint.

Because of the high quality of their research, they are proud to let me know that they were able to answer all of the Dean’s questions and they want to boast to their professor.

I always like to have the Dean attend poster sessions because students don’t always realize just how much they have learned until after they have discussed their research with her.

¹⁴ Cranor, Lorri Faith. “Research Posters 101.” *Crossroads: The ACM Student Magazine*. 3.2 (2004). Web.



Name and Affiliation

Your name and affiliation (e.g. college, class, employer) should be on the poster.

Professional

The poster is pleasant to look at and gives off a professional quality. It is well designed and neat. Colors are well chosen. Fonts are consistent throughout. Posters should be on foam poster boards; not cardboard.

Mechanics and Grammar

The poster is free from grammar and spelling errors.

Graphics

Graphics for the poster are appropriate to the audience and subject. References are provided for all graphics not produced by you.

Accuracy

The material on the poster is accurate. Where appropriate, references are cited.

Correct Formatting

The poster is the correct size for the exhibit.

Suggestion for Success

Be sure to double check the requirements for the poster display in which you are presenting. If certain elements are missing, your poster may be rejected. For example, if the requirements of an exhibit are that you have a three-fold poster and you prepare a flat poster, you might not be allowed to exhibit.



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Student Name: _____

Submitting Poster

Minimum Standards Checklist

Please put a check in front of each statement you can answer "Yes."

- _____ The poster is the correct size.
For this class, "correct size" is defined as a three-fold poster that measures 36" x 48".
- _____ The poster is foam; not cardboard.
- _____ The poster has your name on it.
- _____ References are given for graphics which were not created by you.
- _____ Your poster will be delivered by the deadline.
- _____ Your poster is the required color.
(Poster color is not always required.)

Unless you can appropriately answer "Yes" to all six statements, your poster will not be accepted and you will receive a 0.0 for the assignment.¹⁵

Submitting Your Poster

In addition to this worksheet, please type out your answers to the following questions and submit them with your poster.

1. What is the main theme of your poster?
2. How does your choice of color/graphics advance your theme?
3. What criteria did you use to select the specific facts/information included on the poster?

¹⁵ This criterion reflects how I teach my courses. Other faculty members will have other minimum standards.



The student who designed this poster used his creativity and carved the top of the poster to suggest a type of architecture found on some buildings in Sri Lanka.

The poster was visually appealing and attracted much attention when it was shown at Schoolcraft College's 2008 Celebrate Learning exhibit.



Producing Videos

Modern technology has made it relatively easy for individuals to produce and distribute their own videos. Learning how to make videos is becoming an important job skill. They can also be a great addition for a class presentation.

Windows Movie Maker

Windows Movie Maker is not the most sophisticated program available, but that is a good reason to use it. Windows Movie Maker is the program that is least likely to overwhelm you.

On-line materials provide directions on how to use Windows Movie Maker.

- Thompson, Marissa, et al. "How to Make a Video in Windows Movie Maker." *wikiHow*.
<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Video-in-Windows-Movie-Maker>
- "Getting Started with Windows Movie Maker"
<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-vista/getting-started-with-windows-movie-maker>



I have found that students greatly benefit when working in teams; even if none of the team members has experience making videos. Also, students are especially good at teaching other students how to accomplish certain video tasks.

Academic Integrity and Student Made Videos

There is much misunderstanding concerning the issue of copyright law as it relates to student produced videos. Once a video is uploaded into YouTube, it becomes a commercial venture.

Although copyright law includes a fair use provision for "educational purposes," just because you produced your video for a class does not mean that it is covered by fair use; especially once it is made publically available outside the classroom. For more information about copyright and other issues concerning legal issues for class projects, please go to:

- Academic Integrity
<http://writing.stevenberg.info/integrity.html>





Suggestion for Success

Learning a new skill—such as video production—can take longer than you suspect. Therefore, begin playing with Microsoft Movie Maker as soon as possible. Because of what you will learn in the process, making a nonsense video using the preloaded images and music can be an effective use of your time.

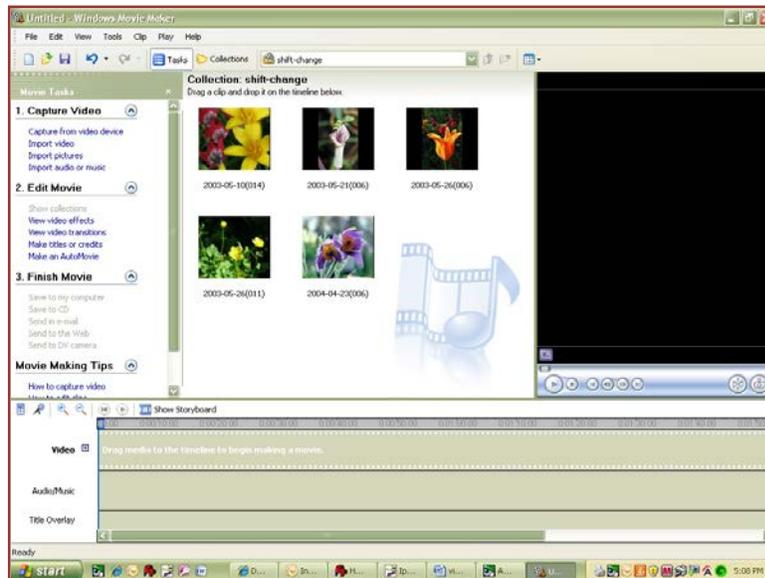


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Student Name: _____

Learning Windows MovieMaker



Assignment

Form a team of three or four colleagues in the class. Working with your colleagues, capture several photographs and sound files. Use these files to create a short video. Be sure to include a title credits and ending credits for your video. You will be given one class period to complete this assignment.

Even though this video will only be used in the classroom, you need to use the commercial standard for finding only legally obtained images, video, and sound.

Once you have finished your video, please save it to your thumb drive so that you can show to your colleagues during the next class period.

Finally, write a reflection on what you learned during the process. You can write your reflection on the back of this worksheet.



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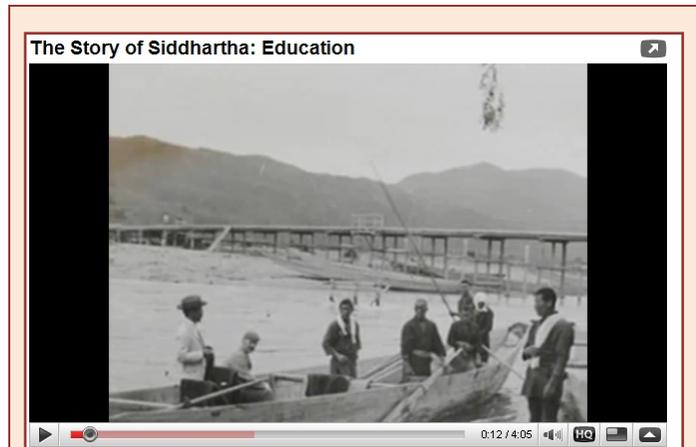
Submitting Video

Minimum Standards Checklist

Please put a check in front of each statement to which you can answer "Yes."

- The video has been successfully uploaded into YouTube.¹⁶
- The video has opening credits.
- The video has closing credits.
- References are given for all material used in the video which you did not produce.
- All images are legally used.
- All music is legally used.
- Your name appears on the video.

Unless you can appropriately answer "Yes" to all seven statements, your video will not be accepted and you will receive a 0.0 for the assignment.¹⁷



Writing for a Larger Audience

When you are preparing a video to be published in YouTube, you are writing for an audience larger than the classroom.

In 2008, Tabe Harold made a video inspired by *Siddhartha* for his Ancient World History class.

He was able to present his video for a statewide conference sponsored by the Liberal Arts Network for Development. It was also shown at a conference sponsored by the Michigan Developmental Education Consortium.

URL for Video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqmHLerpLcY&feature=channel_page

Submitting Your Video

URL for Video:

¹⁶ If you do not have a YouTube account and do not want to open one, please make arrangements with me to upload your video for you.

¹⁷ This criterion reflects how I teach my courses. Other faculty members will have other minimum standards.



Creating a Website

As a way to have students demonstrate digital literacy or to reach a wider audience, your professor may ask you to create a website.

When I first learned how to make websites, I needed to learn HTML. This means that to create a hot link to the writing resources page that supports *The Back Porch Guide to the Research Paper*, I would have to write:

```
<a href="writing.stevenberg.info" target="_blank">Resources About Writing</a>
```

It was also costly to rent Internet space on which to upload your website—even if you knew how to create one. Today, it is much easier—and less expensive—to create a quality website.



Weebly.com

I would recommend starting your website using Weebly.com. Weebly is free and easy to use. If you can use Microsoft Word, you should be able to easily figure out the details of Weebly.

If everyone in your class is required to design a website, your professor might teach one of his/her classes in a computer lab to allow you to work with the software with your class mates.



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Creating a Blog

For some classes, you might be required to create a blog as a way for you to demonstrate digital literacy skills, to reach a larger audience, or for some other purpose.

Word Press

Word Press is a free blogging software that is relatively easy to use. It is the software that I use for *Etena Sacca-vajjena*, my teaching blog¹⁸ and one that students in my classes have used successfully.

- Word Press
<http://www.wordpress.com>
- *Etena Sacca-vajjena*
<http://www.stevenlberg.info/blog>



Create a blog. It's free.

Blogger

Blogger is a free blogging software that I have never used, but I know has been used successfully by friends and colleagues.

- Blogger
<http://www.blogger.com>

¹⁸ Although I use Word Press for *Etena Sacca-vajjena*, I have the software uploaded on my own web space and do not take advantage of the free hosting provided by Word Press. There are two reasons for this. First, I like to have the software on my website so that it better integrated into other work I do. Second, there is no advertising on the blog. Unless a fee is paid to Word Press, advertising does appear on the blogs they host.

