

# HANDOUT: ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PAPERS & TIPS

Research papers are the traditional way of organizing and presenting information. The best way to start your paper is to create an outline. Think about the thesis statement, and the different sections you will need to include in your paper to prove your thesis.

## Basic Outline

### Introduction

- Use this section to *briefly* introduce your topic. Give the reader enough information to orient them about when and where your topic is happening. Don't spend a great deal of time explaining everything. That is what the rest of your paper is for.
- Your thesis should be included in this first paragraph as well. It should help to outline the rest of your argument for the reader, including the connection to the theme, and the impact on history.

### Body Paragraphs

- Each of these paragraphs should make a point that *ties back to your thesis*.
- *Tell a story* with your writing. You want the information to be segmented and arranged in a way that flows from one point to the next.
- You may want to consider tools like *subtitles* to help the reader follow your argument and make it easier to fill in your information as you write.

### Conclusion

- The conclusion of an effective paper *restates* (in a slightly different way than the thesis) your argument and *summarizes* your evidence. Every sentence in this paragraph needs to be powerful and use an active voice. This is your final impression – so make it a good one!
- Making sure to incorporate the theme word(s) into the ending.

## Other Tips to Consider When Writing

1. Physically arrange your work on a flat surface, your main ideas can be written on notecards. This often lets you see "the whole picture," which normally can't fit on a computer screen.
2. Avoid getting rid of any information throughout your process. You may want to discard a lot of your work because it doesn't seem useful at the time, but oftentimes you may find purpose for it later. Even if you do not end up using it, keep it so you can always change your mind.
3. Pay close attention to grammar, writing style, and citations. Avoid starting sentences or paragraphs the same way. Having a variety in your word choice will make your writing more interesting to read.
4. Remember, your analysis of the information should be clear in your paper. Be sure that your voice comes through as you explain your argument. Your claims should be supported with evidence from your research.
5. When you think you are done, read your paper out loud, this will help you notice where wording may be unclear.
6. In addition to your annotated bibliography, National History Day requires you to cite your sources in your paper. See the Paper Workbook for options and links to help.
7. An appendix can be helpful with sharing additional information, but make sure to use them sparingly. Anything that is in an appendix has to be specifically referenced in your paper. They should not be random additions at the end. Data, like graphs and charts, can be compelling pieces of evidence to include instead of individual portraits of people.