# Critical Skills Practice

## Research Paper Assignment Overview

### Instructions

This document provides an overview of the tasks and time line for completing this semester’s Research Paper. You will complete this project over the course of three units this semester. Keep in mind that the project has been broken into three units to give you more time to complete the final paper. As necessary, use time during other units to work on your paper.

### Process: Planning

* Review the assignment instructions and grading criteria thoroughly. Keep in mind that the Research Paper is divided into three major components, spread across three units.
* From the list of topics and questions provided, choose a topic for your paper. Submit it to your teacher for approval.
* Conduct research to help you narrow and develop your topic. Use both print and online sources for your research. Your final paper should be between 1,500 and 2,100 words.
* Complete the first assignment, Research Paper Planning Assignment, which includes writing a thesis statement and developing a formal outline. You will submit the completed plan for a grade.

### Process: Drafting

* Begin drafting your paper. Use your planning assignment and the feedback that you received from your teacher. Also use your research notes to support your thesis.
* Write in standard formal English and use the third person and the present tense. Your ideas should be expressed objectively and be supported with your research. Avoid sentences that begin with “I think” or “I feel.”
* Review the Checklist and Rubric document. Your first draft will be graded against the checklist, so be sure that you have included everything that the checklist requires. Keep the rubric in mind as you draft because your final paper will be graded against the rubric.
* Continue to work on your draft, referring to your research materials. Then submit the first draft of your

Research Paper after you have double-checked it against the checklist. You can find a copy of the checklist in this document.

### Process: Finalizing

* Revise your Research Paper. Use the feedback on the first draft you received from your teacher. Consider feedback you may have received from your mentor or other readers. Also use the revising checklist to help you as you revise.
* Keep the criteria listed in the rubric in mind as you revise your paper. The final paper will be graded against this rubric that assesses the essay in the following five categories: purpose and voice; ideas and content; structure and organization; language, word choice, and tone; and sentences and mechanics. The rubric appears at the end of this document.
* Proofread your Research Paper. Use the proofreading checklist as a guide. Be sure you review how to cite sources correctly, both within your paper and on the Works Cited page, before you hand in your paper.
* Make a final, clean copy of your Research Paper and submit it to your teacher.

### Time Line

Remember that you will be working on this project over the course of three different units. The following due dates reflect this schedule.

| **Task** | **Start** | **Complete** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Submit the topic for your teacher’s approval no later than the Finding Information, Session 3, lesson. Complete the Planning a Research Paper Unit. Submit the Research Paper Planning Assignment. | Day 28 (topic)  Day 36 (outline) | Day 31  Day 38 |
| Complete the Drafting a Research Paper Unit. Submit your Research Paper First Draft. | Day 47 | Day 52 |
| Complete the Finalizing a Research Paper Unit. Submit your Research Paper Final Draft. | Day 60 | Day 65 |

### Grading/Point Values

**Research Paper Planning Assignment:** 100

**Research Paper First Draft:** 200

**Research Paper Final Draft:** 200

### Required Final Draft Length

**Pages:** 5–7 pages

**Word Count:** 1,500–2,100 words

## Grading Criteria – First Draft

Your first draft will be evaluated against this checklist. Each checked item is worth 20 points.

* The purpose of informing the reader about a literary topic is evident.
* The Research Paper has an introduction with a thesis statement.
* The body paragraphs contain facts and quotations from research.
* The Research Paper ends with a conclusion.
* The organization of ideas in the Research Paper is easy to follow, and it includes formatting, graphics, and multimedia.
* The Research Paper includes both internal citations and a Works Cited page.
* The language of the Research Paper is appropriate and clear and includes domain-specific vocabulary and literary techniques or devices that help convey complex ideas.
* The tone of the Research Paper is consistently serious.
* The paper uses a variety of sentence structures and sentence beginnings.
* The paper is at least 1,500 words.

Total possible points for the first draft is 200 points.

## Grading Criteria – Final Draft

Later this semester, you will complete a final draft of your Research Paper. The final draft of your paper will be graded according to this rubric.

**Rubric for Research Paper** Grade final draft of Research Paper according this rubric.

| **Criterion** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Purpose and Voice | The Research Paper does a very good job of fulfilling its purpose of providing substantial information on the chosen topic. The writer’s voice is clear and shows interest in the topic. The Research Paper includes thought-provoking and specific headings, interesting and informative graphics, and an instructive multimedia component that aids comprehension. | The Research Paper does a good job of fulfilling the purpose of providing information on a topic. The writer’s voice is present although at times it is inconsistent. The writer seems interested in the topic. The Research Paper includes useful headings, most of which are specific, relevant graphics, and a multimedia component that aids in comprehension. | The Research Paper does a fair job of fulfilling the purpose of providing information on a topic. The writer’s voice is hard to find, and it is difficult to determine whether the writer is interested in the topic. The Research Paper is missing headings, graphics, or a multimedia component, or it uses one or more of these elements in ways that detract from the writing of the piece. | The purpose of the paper is unclear because the topic is unclear. The voice of the writer is absent. The Research Paper has neither headings, nor graphics, nor a multimedia component. |
| Ideas and Content | The topic of the Research Paper is narrow enough that it can be covered thoroughly, and a thesis statement provides a clear focus for the paper. The topic is fully researched and well developed with facts and quotations from cited sources that include both offline and online sources. The Research Paper includes a comprehensive Works Cited page. | The topic of the Research Paper is appropriate, and the paper contains a thesis statement. The topic is researched, but more evidence is needed to fully support the thesis. Print and online sources have been cited, and there is a Works Cited page. | The topic of the Research Paper is appropriate, but the thesis statement is unclear. Because the thesis statement is unclear, the evidence cited is unfocused. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between cited material and the student’s own ideas. Internal citations and the Works Cited page may be incomplete. | The topic of the Research Paper is too broad or too narrow to be covered thoroughly. There is no thesis statement. Research is minimal, and citations are mostly missing. |
| Structure and Organization | The Research Paper has a clear structure with an introductory paragraph that grabs the reader's attention. Each body paragraph contains evidence that supports the thesis. The conclusion tells the reader what the writer has learned or leaves the reader with something to think about. The writer uses an appropriate organization that fits the topic and thesis. Transitions are used to clarify ideas and to move smoothly within and between paragraphs. | [The Research Paper has a clear structure—introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion—although one part of the structure may not be developed well. The writer occasionally strays from an appropriate organization, but transitions are generally used effectively. | The structure of the Research Paper is somewhat clear. There is an introduction, body, and conclusion, but paragraphing tends to be ineffective. The organization is somewhat unclear, and the writer tends to jump around. Minimal transitions are used to connect ideas. | The structure of the Research Paper is hard to determine. Paragraphing seems random or nonexistent, and there are no transitions between ideas. |
| Language, Word Choice, and Tone | The student considers purpose and audience in the language, word choice, and tone of the Research Paper. The student uses formal language that is powerful and clear, several domain-specific words, and several literary techniques such as similes, metaphors and analogies to explain concepts and provide clear information. The tone is serious and consistently objective, with no personal opinions offered. | The student usually considers purpose and audience in the language, word choice, and tone of the Research Paper. The student usually employs formal language, uses at least one domain-specific word, and includes at least one simile, metaphor, or analogy to explain concepts and provide clear information. The tone is serious and usually objective, although sometimes the student might state an opinion. | The student attempts to consider purpose and audience in the language, word choice, and tone of the Research Paper. However, the student sometimes loses sight of one of these aspects and includes inappropriate language or vague words, misses opportunities to incorporate domain-specific words, or fails to use literary techniques such as similes, metaphors, or analogies to explain concepts and provide clear information. Imprecise language is sometimes confusing, but readers can usually figure out the meaning. The tone of the paper is serious, but some of the language is inform and not always objective. The student's opinions are present. | There is little consideration for purpose and audience in the student's choice of language, word choice, and tone. The Research Paper lacks any domain-specific vocabulary and contains no literary techniques that might explain concepts or provide clear information to readers. The Research Paper contains personal opinions, comments, and exclamations. The Research Paper contains informal language, including slang and other inappropriate expressions. The tone is inconsistent. |
| Sentences and Mechanics | Each sentence expresses a complete thought. Quotations contain the exact words of the source and are punctuated correctly. All citations within the Research Paper and on the Works Cited page are in proper citation format. There are extremely few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, and those that exist do not impede understanding. | Most sentences contain complete thoughts. Quotations are used for the exact words of a source, but sometimes they are not punctuated correctly. Most citations in the paper and on the Works Cited page are in proper citation format. There are few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, and they rarely interfere with a reader's ability to understand. | Sentences do not all contain complete thoughts. There are several unintentional fragments and run-ons. Some quotations are not punctuated correctly, and not all citations are in proper citation format. There are errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that sometimes interfere with the reader's ability to understand. | Many sentences contain errors in structure. Quotations, if used, are incorrectly punctuated. Most citations, if present, are in improper format. Multiple errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics make the paper difficult to understand. |