MIDDLE SCHOOL RESEARCH GUIDE

I. **Introduction**

The purpose of this research manual is to help you prepare a high quality research paper, which meets acceptable standards of organization. Not even the best writer can disguise poor research. That is why it is important to follow certain guidelines when you write a research paper.

II. **Definition of a Research Paper**

A research paper deals with a limited topic and is based upon information from a variety of sources which may include: reference books, books, magazine articles, newspaper articles, scholarly journal articles, government documents, outline resources, and interviews with experts. Your research paper is an original report written from information gathered from an assigned number of sources. It may also include your own analysis or opinions of the information that you find.

III. **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is taking someone else's words and/or ideas without giving that person credit. It is essential that all work handed in is your own writing, and that ideas, facts, or language which you "borrowed" from a source be properly identified. Failure to give credit to any source other than you is plagiarism, and plagiarism is an Honor Code violation.

Example of Plagiarism

This paragraph is copied exactly from another source.

News of the fighting at Lexington and Concord had already reached the city of Philadelphia when delegates gathered for the Second Continental Congress in May 1775. Soon after the meeting began, John Adams urged other delegates to quickly create an American army. He said that the members of the Massachusetts militia camped outside of Boston were ready to be the first soldiers in that army.

This paragraph is restated in the writer's own words; it is not plagiarized.

Delegates to the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in May 1775. The American colonists and the British had already fought in Lexington and Concord, and it seemed likely that there would be more battles between the two. The delegates were strongly encouraged to form an American army as soon as possible.

IV.   Steps in Research

Writing a research paper is a challenging task; however, it will be easier if certain steps are followed. The steps in the process of writing a research paper are listed below.

A. Choose a Narrow Topic
It is very important that you choose a topic that interests you and for which there are enough sources available. List a number of general topics. From your list, select several topics and develop more specific subjects. Choose the best subject for the paper. It is important, also, that the topic should not cover too broad an idea such as "Twentieth –Century United States Presidents." Instead, the topic should be limited in scope--- "Franklin D. Roosevelt" or "Important Contributions of Franklin D. Roosevelt." Once you have chosen your topic, generate a question which explains the point of your subject and what you will cover.

B. Location of Source Materials
The next step in the research process is the **location of source materials**. Magazine articles, encyclopedias, reference books, nonfiction works, visual materials, newspaper articles, e-mail, interviews, and items found on the World Wide Web are examples of common source materials. If you do not find at least three good references, it would be wise (with your teacher's permission) to change your topic. You should list these sources, which is called your **bibliography**, on a separate sheet of paper or on separate note cards (3x5 inches or 4x6 inches). Source materials **are not** all listed in the same way. For example, bibliographic information for a **print** source is listed differently from an article found on the World Wide Web. How to list different source materials is found in a separate section of the research guide.

C. Evaluating Internet Resources
When choosing internet sources, keep in mind that **anyone** may publish a web page. This means not all information on the internet is true or correct. As a researcher, it is your responsibility to evaluate the web site to determine whether the information is useful, accurate, current, and objective. Using the checklist below will help you evaluate internet resources.
1. Is the information relevant to my paper?
2. Who created the page?
3. What organization is the person affiliated with?
4. Has the site been reviewed online by an online reviewing agency?
5. Does the domain (i.e. edu, com, gov) of the page influence your evaluation of the site?
6. Are you positive that the information is true?
7. What can you do to prove that it is true?
8. When was the site created?
9. Is there a date for the last update of the site?

10. Is the information presented in an objective (fair, unbiased) manner?

D. **Working Bibliography**

As you begin to collect information from various sources, you will develop a working bibliography. This is your **first** list of possible sources that you will use in your final paper. It is **very important** that you make note of the required information for each source **as you find it**. Once you begin this list, keep it in a secure place so that you can add to or delete from the list as you do your research.

E. **Required Bibliographic Information**

On index cards or your notes, list the following information for each source:

- ♦ the name of the author
- ♦ the complete title of the source
- ♦ the name and location of the publisher
- ♦ the copyright date or date of publication
- ♦ the library call number, to make finding the source easier if you need to locate the information again
- ♦ if you used more than one library, name the library in which the source was found
- ♦ the page numbers from which you took notes
- ♦ source number

For magazines, newspapers, journals, and electronic media, add this information:

- ♦ the name of the magazine, newspaper or journal
- ♦ the complete article title
- ♦ the selection of a newspaper in which the article can be found
- ♦ the date of issue, the volume and issue number, if available
- ♦ the complete web address for internet sites

F. **Begin Reading and Taking Notes**

The fourth step is to begin **reading and taking notes.** Since you will be using several source materials, and you are going to rewrite your notes into a final research paper, you should use note cards or whatever format your teacher requires. You can do a better job of reading and taking notes for your report if you first develop an outline for it. The outline does not have to be too detailed, since its purpose is to guide you while you read. When you are ready to finalize your research paper, your outline will need to be revised. It is important that the final outline reflect your actual research.

G. **Working Outline**

An outline is a writing plan that shows the main points that will be included in your completed paper. A good outline also

shows the sequence in which the main points will be discussed and their relationship to one another. The working outline will help you write a first draft. A summary of guidelines for writing a formal outline is as follows:

- ♦ Place the topic at the top of the outline.
- ♦ Use a heading that begins with a Roman numeral for each main idea.
- ♦ List supporting details under each main idea. Capital letters are used.
- ♦ Details are listed under subordinate ideas. For each of these use an Arabic numeral such as 1, 2, 3, etc.
- ♦ Begin each entry with a capital letter.

AN EXAMPLE OF A FORMAL OUTLINE
Americans Prepare for War with Britain

I. Second Continental Congress
    A. Two Major Decisions
        1. Creating an Army
        2. Selecting G. Washington leader of Continental Army

II. Battle of Bunker Hill
    A. General Gage, British general, charges Bunker Hill
        1. British won the hill after 3 attempts
        2. Important to colonists-gave them confidence that they could hold their own against the British

III. Move Toward Independence
    A. Colonists attempt peace-failed!
    B. Thomas Paine
        1. Writer of <u>Common Sense</u>
        2. Encouraged colonists to cut all ties to Britain and create a **republic**

IV. Colonists Declare Independence
    A. Declaration of Independence
    B. Purpose of Declaration
    C. Thomas Jefferson author of Declaration

*** Cornell Note form may be used in place of a formal outline***

V. **Writing the Paper**

    A. **First Draft**
Organization is important in writing your first draft. Focus on expressing your ideas clearly and in the correct sequence. Once you have the ideas on paper, revising becomes easier. The first step is to arrange the note cards in the same order as your working outline. Then, before you write each section, think about the section as a whole. Again, be sure not to use exact words from your sources without giving credit. Take notes in your own words in order to avoid plagiarism.

Scheduling the appropriate amount of time for writing the first draft is important. Set aside enough time so that you have a good idea of how clearly you have written a particular aspect of your topic. Ask yourself these questions: a) Do my ideas flow logically? b) Are there "gaps" in my thinking? c) Is my purpose expressed clearly?

Before you write the final paper, reread, evaluate, and revise carefully. You may need to prepare several revisions before the completion of the final paper. As you reread and evaluate, remember to do the following:

- Write the material in your own words.
- Write the research paper using **past tense.**
- **Do not use first person or second person when writing the paper. Write only in third person.**
- Quotations are used only to emphasize important points or as proof of your conclusions. **The research paper should never be an informal essay.**
- Give proper credit when you use someone else's words.
- The first paragraph directly states the focus and intent of the paper.
- The concluding paragraph restates the major themes of the paper.

B. Preparation of the Final Copy

You are now ready to prepare the final copy! Before handling in the final copy, proofread your paper one more time and make any necessary corrections. While reading, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the first paragraph directly state the focus and intent of the paper?
- Did you avoid the use of first person (I and we)?
- Do the paragraphs lead logically and clearly into each other?
- Did you use transition words and phrases to show the progression of logical ideas? (Examples: after, first, later, soon, meanwhile, finally, following, at first, primarily, as a result, for that reason, therefore, consequently, however, in the same way, on the other hand, for instance, indeed, of course, moreover)
- Did you keep your purpose and audience in mind?
- Does your concluding paragraph restate the major points of your paper?
- **Spell Check is not proofreading!** Nonetheless, use Spell-Check and Grammar-Check, in addition to your proofreading, before turning in a paper.

Specific writing instructions for the final copy are as follows:

- ♦ The paper should be written neatly, typed, or word processed.
- ♦ The paper should be standard white 81/2" x 11".
- ♦ The typing must be double spaced using a 12-poing font.
- ♦ The top margin on the first page of the body of the paper should be 2 inches
- ♦ Leave a margin of one inch at the top, bottom, left, and right of the page of all pages following page one.
- ♦ All pages, except for the first page, should be numbered.

The research paper should be organized in the following way:
- ♦ Title page (example on following page)
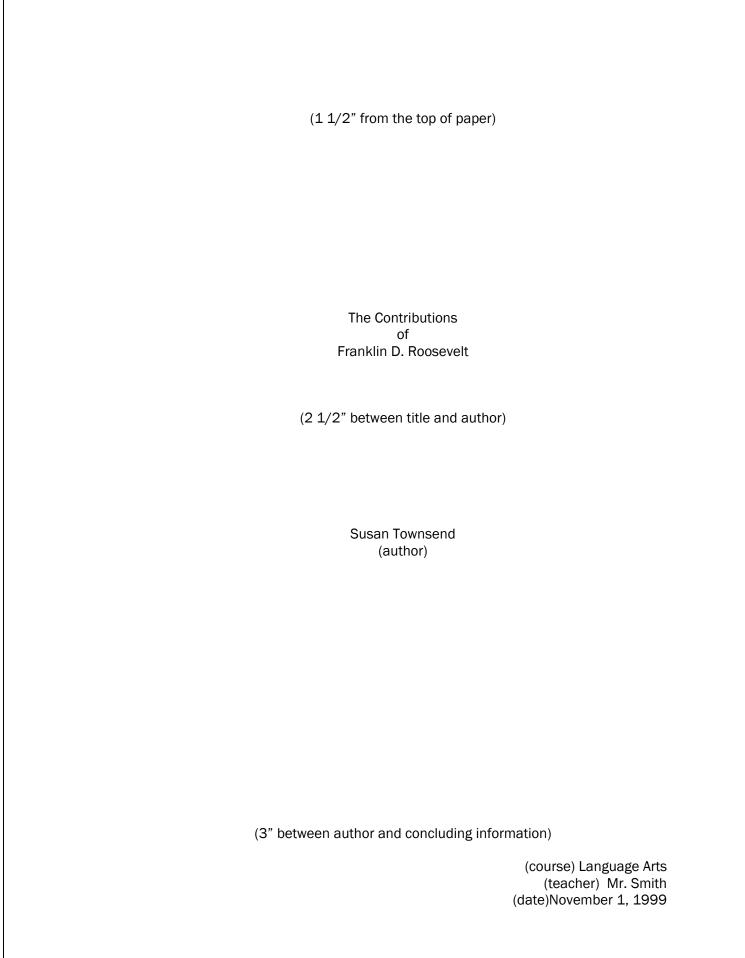- ♦ The body of the paper
- ♦ Bibliography

The last page of a research paper is the bibliography.

This is an **alphabetical listing (do not number)** of all your sources by the last name of authors. Bibliography cards will be helpful in writing the bibliography.

The first line of an entry is not indented, but be sure to indent the second line. Pay attention to the location of periods, commas, and colons as you write the entries. A bibliography style manual is included in this booklet.

Checklist for Writing a Research Paper

1. Choose a narrow topic

    ☐ **A.** Brainstorm a number of general topics.

    ☐ **B.** Generate more detailed, specific subjects for few of the topic ideas.

    ☐ **C.** Select the best topic and specific subject for the paper.

    ☐ **D.** Brainstorm words/subjects to look up in an encyclopedia, library catalog, and periodicals.

    ☐ **E.** Narrow the topic so it can be covered properly in the assigned length.

2. Determine the location of source materials

    ☐ **A.** Obtain all of your sources, using the school library, public library, and internet.

    ☐ **B.** Skim each source to determine its usefulness.

    ☐ **C.** Create a bibliography card for each source used.

3. Note Taking

    ☐ **A.** Develop an outline as a guide for research and note taking.

    ☐ **B.** Read and make notes in an organized manner.

    ☐ **C.** Site source one each note card.

4. Working Outline

    ☐ **A.** Organize note cards by topic.

    ☐ **B.** Rewrite outline in a final form.

    ☐ **C.** Label each note card with a code that corresponds to its place in the outline.

5. Writing the Paper

    ☐ **A.** Write the first draft using your own words.

    ☐ **B.** Write in the past tense.

    ☐ **C.** Write only in the third person.

    ☐ **D.** Revise first draft to create a final draft.

    ☐ **E.** Proof for spelling, punctuation, documentation of sources, clarity, and smooth transitions.

    ☐ **F.** Create final version.

    ☐ **G.** Create bibliography, following the manual carefully.

    ☐ **H.** Create a title page.

(1 1/2" from the top of paper)

The Contributions
of
Franklin D. Roosevelt

(2 1/2" between title and author)

Susan Townsend
(author)

(3" between author and concluding information)

(course) Language Arts
(teacher) Mr. Smith
(date)November 1, 1999

MLA Bibliographic Style

Modified for Middle School

1. For each source listed, begin first line at margin and indent each line that follows.
2. Underline or use italics for titles of books, periodicals, and software. Titles of articles are enclosed in quotation marks.
3. Note punctuation and follow exactly.
4. If required information, such as author or place of publication, is not available, just leave it out.
5. Arrange all sources in one list, alphabetically by first word, which will generally be either the author's last name or the first important word of the title.
6. Do not number bibliographic entries.

PRINT SOURCES

Book with one author:
1. Author.
2. Title of book. (underlined)
3. City of publication:
4. Publisher, date of publication.

Stenger, Carl. <u>A Day in America</u>. New
    York: Doubleday, 1985.

Book with two authors:
1. Authors (in the order the are given in the book).
2. Title of book. (underlined)
3. City of publication:
4. Publisher, date.

Smith, Elizabeth and David Williamson. <u>Rocks and Gemstones</u>. Chicago:
    Macmillan, 1995.

Book with no author:

<u>Mexico</u>. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Encyclopedia and other familiar reference books:

1. Author of article (if available). (The author may be listed at the beginning or end of an article)
2. "Title of article."
3. Title of book. (underlined)
4. Date of edition. (Volume and page number not necessary if articles are arranged alphabetically).

Eiselen, Malcom R. "Frankline, Benjamin." <u>The World Book</u>
    <u>Encyclopedia</u>. 1994.

"France." <u>Compton's Enclopedia</u>. 1992.

Article in a periodical:

1. Author (if available).
2. "Title of article."
3. Periodical title (underlined)
4. Date: page.

Cooper, Beth. "The Explorers of the New World." <u>Cobblestone</u>.May 1996: 20-22.

"N.F.L. Training Camp Report." <u>The New York Times</u>,
    21 August 1996: B12.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY THE RESEARCHER

1. Name of person interviewed.
2. Type of interview.
3. Date of interview.

Hunt, James. Personal interview. 20 August 1990.

Ford, Harrison. Telephone interview. 26 January 1998.

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

1. Author (if available).
2. "Title of article."
3. Title of product (underlined or in italics)
4. Edition or version (if relevant)
5. CD-ROM.
6. City of publication: Publisher, date of publication.

Cashman, Katherine V. "Volcano." <u>World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia</u>.1995 ed.
    CD-ROM. Chicago: World Book Inc, 1995.

"Japan." <u>Cartopedia</u>. CD-ROM. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1995.

Solnick, Bruce B. "Columbus, Christopher." <u>Grolier MultiMedia</u>
    <u>Encyclopedia</u>.1994 ed. CD-ROM. Danbury, CT: Grolier Electronic Publishing
    Inc., 1992.

Leicester, Henry M. "Chemistry." <u>Microsoft Encarta</u>. 1994 ed. CD-ROM.
    Redmond,WA: Microsoft Corporation, 1994.

"Engine, Four-Stroke." <u>David Macauley: The Way Things Work</u>. CD-ROM. New
    York: Dorling Kindersley, 1994.

Periodical article found in CD-ROM database:

1. Author.
2. "Title of article."
3. Periodical title (underlined)
4. Date: page.
5. Title of database. (underlined)
6. CD-ROM.
7. City of publication: name of electronic publisher, date of electronic publication.

Gray, Robert. "Do You Believe in Dragons?" <u>Ranger Rick</u>. Oct 1993. 21-29. <u>SIRS Discoverer.</u> CD-ROM. Boca Raton: SIRS, Inc., Spring 1996.

Timney, Mark C. "Virtual Chills and Thrills." <u>Boy's Life</u>. April 1995: 13-15 <u>Primary Search</u>. CD-ROM. Peabody, MA: Ebsco, March 1996.

From an article from an encyclopedia found online:

1. Author, if shown
2. "Title of the article."
3. Name of encyclopedia (underlined).
4. Name of publisher, date of publication (if available).
5. Date of your visit
6. Name of the outline service you used.

"Animal Habitats." <u>Compton's Living Encyclopedia</u>. Compton's Learning Company, 1996. 22 August 1999 America Online.

Keller, Ralph. "Fruit Flies." <u>Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia.</u> Grolier Interactive Inc. 10 September 1996 America Online.

World Wide Web:

1. Author (if known).
2. "Title of article."
3. Title of complete work. (if relevant, underlined)
4. Date of visit
5. <full http address>. (enclosed in angle brackets)

Norton, R.J. "An Overview of John Wilkes Booth's Assassination of President Abraham Lincoln." <u>Abraham Lincoln's Assassination</u>. 28 November 1998 <http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln75.html>.

"Statistical Summary: America's Major Wars." 14 August 1998<http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/other/stats/warcost.htm>.

"Callisto." <u>The Nine Planets</u>. 21 May 1998 <http://seds.lpl.arizona.edu/nineplanets/callisto.html>.

Personal e-mail:

1. Author.
2. <Author's e-mail address> (enclosed in angle brackets)

3. "Subject line from posting."
4. Date of publication
5. Personal e-mail.

Tope, Robert.<bobtope@aol.com>. "Citrus Forecast."
    3 Sept. 1999. Personal email.