



## Organizing a Research Paper

Do you have a research paper coming up and don't know how it should be organized? Here are a few tips on getting started.

### **First: Generate Your Ideas**

Before writing your research paper, it can be helpful to organize your thoughts on the topic. Ways to do this:

- **Brainstorming**– Write down anything that comes to mind when thinking about your topic.
- **Freewriting**– Write quickly for 10ish minutes without stopping or editing. Go over what you have written at the end of your time slot– then lather, rise, and repeat.
- **Questioning**– Ask yourself the basic “who, what, when, where, why/how” about your topic. Write down your questions and use them as a starting point.
- **Re-research**– Brainstorm different keywords in the search engine to find any missed articles. (The research librarians at the reference desk in Hutchins can help you with this).

## **Second: Write Your (Working) Thesis**

A thesis is a statement that identifies your main point/argument for the entire paper. To learn how to write a thesis, please grab the thesis tip sheet located in the same area that you grabbed this one.

## **Third: Organizing the Paper**

Finally, what you have been waiting for! Organizing a research paper can look differently for different topics. To start out, it may be beneficial to create a basic outline of your paper. Look below for an example:

### **Introduction**

- Thesis

### **Background information**

- This is usually placed after the introduction to provide background information if needed

### **Counter Argument**

- This is not always placed before this first paragraph of supporting evidence, but is commonly seen here

### **Supporting Evidence #1**

- Topic Sentence into this point
  - Subpoint
  - Subpoint
  - Subpoint

### **Supporting Evidence #2**

- Topic Sentence into this point
  - Subpoint

- Subpoint
- Subpoint

Repeat this until all supporting evidence and subpoints have been covered and then end with a concluding paragraph.

**For tips on how to write introductions and conclusions, please come back to our tip sheet area– we have those too!**

Like previously said, there are many ways to organize a paper. Here are a few examples:

- **Narration:** telling a story
- **Process:** a sequence of steps
- **Definition:** explaining the meaning of words and ideas
- **Division and Classification:** grouping ideas, objects, or events
- **Compare and Contrast:** Finding similarities/differences in topics
- **Analogy:** making a comparison of two seemingly unrelated topics
- **Cause and Effect:** explaining why something occurred due to the influence of something else

### **Finally: Revision of Research Paper**

Congratulations for making it to the end! You are probably wondering– “what else could this tip sheet have to offer me?”

Well, if you have gotten to the point where your first draft is completed, here are some tips on how to edit your organization:

- Reverse outline your paragraphs and ask yourself if the topic for each paragraph make sense in the order they occur
- Write out topic sentences and make sure they flow with the order of the paper
- Read (or have it read aloud to you) to see if it aligns with what you wanted
- Ask a friend to read your paper and ask if there are moments that shift confusingly/awkwardly/etc.
- Make an appointment at <https://berea.mywconline.com> to come in and get help from a peer tutor