

THE RESEARCH PAPER

A basic guide

WHAT IS A RESEARCH PAPER?

Research papers focus on answering a question by researching a subject and citing different sources. It is not an opinion essay, but it can present a well-founded argument.

UNDERSTAND AND RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC:

- **First, read your essay question or topic description carefully.** Identify the key words.
- **Before researching, do a brainstorming exercise** based on what you already know.
 - See the handout: **Brainstorming**.
- **Start your research** by searching for keywords in encyclopedias.
- **Consult a librarian** if you need help:
 - Dawson College Library website: <https://library.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/>.
- **Read your sources, taking notes.** Write down a few key ideas from each source and find passages you could use as quotes. Record the page numbers and other citation information to make it easy to reference later.

PLAN YOUR PAPER:

- **Sort through your notes.** What sources can help you build an argument? Do your sources suggest any supporting points? Do you have multiple sources that could support the same point? Do you need more sources to cover a specific topic?
- **Write a thesis and an outline of your essay.** Some students begin with the **thesis**, then move to supporting points, while others come up with supporting points before building a thesis.
 - See the handout: **The Outline** and **The Thesis of an Essay**.
- **Adjust your thesis** as you gain new insight into your research.

PRESENT YOUR RESEARCH:

- **Write a draft.** It should include an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.
- **Refer to many different sources** to strengthen the arguments in your body paragraphs.
- **Your research should be followed by citations**, as well as a **title page** and **bibliography** if required. It should follow a consistent **citation style**.
 - See the **MLA** and **APA** handouts.

FINALIZE IT:

- **Always plan enough time to revise and edit your research paper.**
 - See the handouts: **Academic Style** and **Revising and Editing**.
- **Write a well-developed conclusion.** Often students neglect the conclusion, even though it presents you with the opportunity to express insights and/or questions for future research.
- **Write a descriptive title.** It may indicate the topic, author(s), or work(s) under discussion. Often, they include a colon followed by subtitle.
 - "Child Poverty in Ontario: A Failure of the Welfare System"
 - "The Movement for Women's Voting Rights in Quebec, 1900-1940."
 - "Plato's *Republic*: Dystopia or Utopia?"



THE RESEARCH PAPER

Continued

Title indicates topic and suggests thesis

An Analysis of the Industrial Working Conditions of Men, Women, and Children
by Arwen Low

Introduction:

Hook

The advent of the Industrial Era was accompanied by the rise of a new social group: the industrial working class. Men, women, and children sold their labor, often in factories, in exchange for low wages. Primary sources from the late 1700s to the early 1900s record their plight; these dates correspond to the start of the first phase of industrialization and the end of the second phase of technological standardization (“Industrial Revolution”). This essay will analyze sources documenting the working conditions in various industries in Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. In addition, Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* will also be treated as a primary source, since, though it is a work of fiction, the fictional characters and overarching plot of the novel are a vessel for representing the true conditions Sinclair witnessed (Lohnes). **By analyzing these primary sources through the lenses of health and safety, pay and working time, and job security, it is evident that the working conditions of men, women, and children were abysmal across time, place, and industry.**

Essential background information to define the place, time, and scope of what is under discussion

Thesis statement (phrased to include a preview of the main points)

Body Paragraph:

Topic sentence expresses the paragraph’s overall point

Firstly, the working conditions of men were unsafe and hindered their overall well-being. The dangerous labour conditions of working class men across industries put them at high risk for injury and illness. Industrial Era factories across countries were often unsanitary, which increased the likelihood of illness. As Montreal shoe cutter John F. O’Rourke testified before the Canadian Royal Commission on the Conditions of Labor and Capital in 1887, none of the several factories in which he had labored had a sanitary inspector. In addition, none of these factories were equipped with fire escapes, and had only a single exit; as there were often 100 to 200 people working in these Montreal factories, dispersed across three floors, this meant that chances of survival in case of a fire for upper-story workers were slim (**Document 5**). Elsewhere, the temperature in factories was generally not regulated. As Upton Sinclair reveals in *The Jungle*, many men working in meatpacking factories at the turn of the twentieth century did so in below freezing cellars (**Sinclair 18**). This increased their likelihood to catch some viruses, such as the common cold (**Eske**). Most men who were injured in the workplace received no financial compensation. Workman’s compensation only began being implemented by the end of the nineteenth century when German Chancellor Otto Von Bismark established Workers’ Accident Insurance in 1884 (**Class Notes**). **Not only were men subjected to hazardous working conditions, but women had to deal with the same dangers, in addition to female-specific workplace health and safety concerns.**

Information from sources provide support for the point

Citing multiple sources strengthens the point

Transitional sentence leads to the next idea

Conclusion:

~~~~~ The other body paragraphs have been skipped ~~~~~

Restatement of thesis / Recap of main points

**Primary sources from the Industrial Era divulge the deplorable working conditions of men, women, and children; industrial workplaces were unsafe and miserable, the pay that workers received for extensive working hours was pitiful, and workers could not even count on job security in exchange for their labor.** An analysis of the subjugation of the industrial working class can be done with a distanced lens and a societal pat on the back for the work done by labour unions and workplace reform bills. **However, inadequate workplaces did not cease with the start of the third, digital phase of industrialization in the developed West, and unfortunately, forced labor, debt bondage, child labor, industrial sexual exploitation, and modern slavery persist.**

Insights arising from the entire essay

For more information, contact the Academic Skills Centre.