

Writing a Research Paper [Title]

By
[Name of Student]
For
[Course Title]
[Due Date]

Every good research paper consists of a title page, an introduction, a body, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The title page tells the reader the topic of the paper and who the author is. The introductory paragraph(s) of a research paper is the most important in the paper. It should contain a clear and concise thesis statement that tells the reader what you are trying to prove. An example of a thesis statement is as follows. “In this paper I will argue that one of the unintended consequences Calvin’s theology of predestination is that it ultimately makes God the author of sin.” A clear thesis makes a clear and readable paper. A good way to write a clear thesis is to start with a question, like, “Does Calvin leave room for human free will?” After your research is done, turn the question into a statement. This is your thesis.

The body of the paper serves to support the thesis of a paper. It is often divided into different sections separated by subheadings. Subheadings help to clarify the supporting points of the thesis. For example, I could use the subheadings **Double Predestination**, **Irresistible Grace**, and **Logical Consequences** to argue the thesis above.

The body of the paper should also contain primary source citations. According to Turabian, longer quotations are to be block quotations:

Present a prose quotation of five or more lines as a block quotation. Introduce the quotation in your own words in the text; see 7.5. If you introduce the quotation with a complete sentence, end the sentence with a colon. If you use only an attribution phrase such as *notes*, *claims*, *argues*, or *according to* along with the author’s name, end the phrase with a comma. If you weave the quotation into the syntax of your sentence, do not use any punctuation before the quotation if no punctuation would ordinarily appear there . . .

Single-space a block quotation, and leave a blank line before and after it. Do not add quotation marks at the beginning or end, but preserve any quotation marks in the original. Indent the entire quotation as far as you indent the first line of a paragraph. (In literary studies and other fields concerned with close analysis of texts, you should indent the first line of a block quotation further than the rest of the quotation if the text is indented in the original: See also 25.3.) For other punctuation and capitalization within the quotation, see 25.3.1.¹

1. Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed., rev. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, and University of Chicago Press Editorial Staff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 349.

Shorter quotations are simply cited in the text of the paper using quotation marks and are not set off as block quotations.

Form and Content

Most professors grade a paper on form and content. Correct form is necessary for an academic paper to read easily. The form of the paper refers to its structure, grammar, and citation. The standard for citation in academic papers used at Nashotah House is *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian, which follows the *Chicago Manual of Style*. There you will find answers to most of your questions. For example, Chapter 17 has examples of how to cite books,² journal articles,³ edited works,⁴ translated works,⁵ and almost everything else; and you will also find the difference between a long citation,⁶ a short citation,⁷ and *Ibid.*⁸

The content of a paper refers to its thought and argumentation. A well-written paper should critically engage primary and secondary sources and not merely proof-text. It should demonstrate a mastery over the primary literature and some serious engagement with the secondary literature. A common problem of new students is to over research a paper by trying to read too widely. To avoid this, ask the professor what is the standard work on the subject and engage that work. For

2. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1978), 124.

3. James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65 (1983): 95–122.

4. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2d ed., gen. ed. Berard L. Marthaler, 15 Vols. (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson, Gale, 2003), 10:126–28.

5. Nicholas Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes The Preacher (1555–1626): The Origins of the Mystical Theology of the Church of England*, foreword by Michael Ramsey, afterword by A. M. Allchin, trans. Andrew Louth (Clarendon Press, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 126.

6. Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 203.

7. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 132.

8. *Ibid.*, 129. *Ibid.* is an abbreviation of the Latin word *ibidem*, meaning "in the same place."

church history and historical theology, start researching with the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*; in biblical studies begin with the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* or similar works. For most general topics, these resources will give you an excellent start to your paper and they are the standards in the field.

The final paragraph(s) of a paper is the conclusion. The conclusion should be a restatement of your thesis and the supporting points of your position. Remember, professors are at least equally as concerned with *how* as with *what* you argue.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Del Colle, Ralph. *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
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