

BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH REPORT GUIDE

A **biography** is a true story of a person's life written by another person. Good biographers research subjects extensively in order to present information accurately. The writer, or biographer, interviews the subject if possible and researches the person's life. Biographers often focus on remarkable or admirable aspects of their subjects. Although biographers often present their subject in a favorable way, they also strive for a balance between fact and interpretation. Usually, biographers also must decide which facts and which parts of a subject's life to include.

An **autobiography** is an account of a person's life written by that person and usually told in the first person point of view using the pronoun *I*. In an autobiography, the writer details significant events and people in his or her life.

An autobiography is usually book length because it covers a long span of time. A shorter form of autobiographical writing is a **personal narrative**, in which the writer focuses on a significant experience in his or her life. Other short forms of autobiographical writing include **journals, diaries, and letters**.

This biographical research can take various forms and can encompass a variety of learning experiences. After choosing a subject to research, get an overview of your subject by reading general articles in reference books, such as encyclopedias, biographical dictionaries, newspaper articles, magazine articles, films, videos, television programs, autobiographies, and biographies. A new approach to research is to search the Internet for information.

After getting a general overview of your subject, you should develop a **thesis statement**, which is simply one or two sentences that states what you plan to accomplish in your paper. A **thesis statement** focuses your ideas into one or two sentences. It should present the topic of your paper and also make a comment about your position in relation to the topic. Your **thesis statement** should tell your reader what the paper is about and also help guide your writing and keep your argument focused.

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5 Paragraph Biography Essay Outline

The next step is to develop a **preliminary outline** to help guide your research. A preliminary outline is simply an informal list of ideas to cover in your paper in the order that you plan to cover them. The headings in this first outline come from the general information gathered during the overview stage and from your purpose statement. The outline does not have to be detailed. Its purpose is to guide and organize your research. As you begin your research, you will probably find some subheadings that do not belong in this preliminary outline and discover new subheadings that should be added.

Throughout your research, you will add, delete, and rearrange material in the preliminary outline. Here is a sample outline for a biographical research report:

- I. Early Life (Introduction)
 - a. Birthplace and date of birth
 - b. Family background and childhood
 - c. Schools, colleges and early young adult experiences

- II. Values (Body)
 - a. Which of the 9 values does this person possess?
 - b. How did they use their values?

- III. Barriers (Body)
 - a. What barriers did they face ?
 - b. How did the barriers affect their values?
 - c. Did they overcome this barrier and how?

- IV. Conclusion (Summary)
 - a. Give your opinion of them based on what you have learned doing your research?
 - b. Summarize your information

Cover Page

- a. The title of your paper
- b. Your name
- c. Today's date
- d. Picture of the person

Works Cited Page

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All resources should be written on a separate sheet of paper. Be sure to list source author, title, publisher, copyright date, pages, etc. for source used. This information will be extremely important as you prepare your final bibliography page, the **Works Cited**. (Refer to Source Card Handout to see how to enter information for various sources.) Take notes on material directly related to a heading or subheading in your preliminary outline. Before taking notes, read quickly over the relevant material. You may take notes by summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting.

After your research is completed, you need to prepare a **graphic organizer**.

After you organize your information in your graphic organizer, you will be able to write your rough draft. A rough draft is your first attempt to write in a logical order the material that supports your purpose statement. As you write, you may find that each item in your outline develops easily into one or two paragraphs. However, you may also find that you lack sufficient details on a particular topic and you must do more research. If so, stop immediately and gather the additional information before you continue your first draft. When writing your rough draft, you should pay close attention to **documenting sources** and **incorporating quotations** by using the **MLA** style. (Refer to grammar book and other suggested **MLA** reference guides.)

Be sure that your paper has an **introduction** and a **conclusion**. Although the introduction does not appear as a heading on your outline, it is nevertheless a very important part of your paper. The **introduction** should catch the reader's interest. It should clearly indicate the topic and your purpose in writing about it. The **thesis statement** (your purpose statement in its revised form) is often the last sentence in the introduction. Here is an introduction for the subject in the sample outline:

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION

Eva Duarte Peron was the second wife of President Juan Peron of Argentina. Eva, also called Evita, helped Peron rise to power. She became a favorite of her country's citizens and an influential, although unofficial, member of Peron's government. Her own experiences with the working class enabled her to act capably as her husband's political liaison with labor interests, women, and the poor. She became one of the most famous and influential women of her day.

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The **body** of your paper states and develops the main ideas in your outline.

The **conclusion**, or the last paragraph of your paper, leaves a final impression about your subject. That impression should give the paper a sense of completeness by reinforcing the main idea expressed the thesis statement. The conclusion should make a final statement that is an extension of the points discussed in the body. Here is an example of a concluding paragraph about the subject in the sample outline:

SAMPLE CONCLUSION

As a result of Eva Peron's social welfare work with Argentina's disadvantaged, she was affectionately known and remembered by the diminutive Evita. Evita was the second most influential figure in Argentina and the mainstay of her husband's support.

Evita's death, economic difficulties, increasing labor unrest, and his excommunication from the Roman Catholic church, further weakened Peron's government. In 1955, three years after Evita's death, he was ousted by the military. After eighteen years of exile, Peron was allowed to return to Argentina in 1973 and was elected President, with his third wife, Isabel, as Vice-president.

By evaluating your **rough draft**, you identify the strengths and weaknesses of your paper. To make the changes necessary to improve your paper, you should analyze each problem that I noted on your rough draft. You can revise by adding, cutting, reordering, and replacing. Proofread your paper for errors in usage, grammar, and mechanics.

Write the **final draft** of your paper, following the **MLA** guidelines.

Prepare the bibliography, or **Works Cited** page, following the **MLA** guidelines. This gives the reader complete information about the sources used in the paper.

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Sample MLA Guide

Imma Student
Ms. Teacher
English
1 January 3000

My Super Awesome Title

The first sentence of every paragraph will be indented using the "Tab" key. The font will be something standard like Times New Roman and size 12. Lines will be double spaced with 1" margins on all sides. Your last name and page number go at the top right.

When you want to quote someone, you need to give them proper credit. Quotes less than four solid lines will be included in paragraphs like this: "100% of the shots you don't take don't go in" (Gretzky). Long quotes are put into block format:

These do not have quotation marks and every line is indented so that it is easy to distinguish from your own work.

You do not change the font size or do anything else (Name 1).

Then the rest of the paragraph is written without an indentation.

Citations must be formatted using the author's name if it is available followed by a page number, line number for poetry, act and scene for a play, and sometimes editions. If there is no author, use the webpage title, organization title, or anything else you find. For YouTube, Instagram, etc... the username is the author. Films are cited using the director's name and a time stamp.

Chapter or Topic Headings

To divide your paper into sections, the sub-heading will be justified on the left, in small caps, and a different font from your text. Do not add additional space between paragraphs.

Common In-Text Citation Formats

Book or Article w/ Editions

(Shakespeare 14; vol. 1)

YouTube Video

(PewdiePie "Level 7")

Film

(Lee 1:12:30)

Web Article w/ No Author

(CNN "Help")

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