

Instructor's Notes on this Assignment:

In English V03, I assign a "Vocational I-Search" as my research essay assignment and ask students to follow a set of steps – I'm using scaffolding – to help students understand the research process. The first step guides students through the prewriting stage by asking questions like, "When you close your eyes and project yourself five years into the future, what do you see yourself doing that makes you smile or makes you feel secure or excited?" and "Do you know someone who is happy in life: what does that person do in his/her career or job?". The subsequent steps outline "Doing Research," "Taking Careful Notes and Tips to Avoid Plagiarism," and "Drafting a Thesis Statement, Making an Outline, and Writing your Paper." My purpose is not only to guide students during each stage of their research work but also to assist the librarians and other support staff whom I schedule to instruct students throughout the six to eight weeks of the assignment.

Research Essay: The Vocational I-Search

Due Dates: Outline and "Works Cited" is due **April 12**

First Draft and Second Draft are due **April 28 and April 30**

Final Draft and Folder is due **May 6**

Step One: Working with your Topic

Your task for this assignment is to **write a research paper on an aspect of a job you would like to have in the future or one that you find interesting**. To help you get started, try answering the following set of questions:

- When you close your eyes and project yourself five years into the future, what do you see yourself doing that makes you smile or makes you feel secure or excited?
- What are some of the talents, skills, and values you are most proud of?
- Is there a family member or acquaintance you admire: what does that person do in his/her job?
- What do you enjoy doing the most in your spare time, and is there a way to make money legally while doing it?
- What do you admire most about a particular parent, both your parents, or a parental figure in your life?
- Do you know someone who is happy in life: what does that person do in his/her career or job?

Step Two: Doing Research

When you have decided on a job that interests you, try to narrow your topic to a particular aspect of that job that is worth researching. Ask yourself:

- What do I hope to learn about my future job?
- What kind of setting will I be working in?
- What will I be expected to do on a daily basis?
- What do others have to say about this job and the skills they possess in performing it well? What is the earning potential for this job?
- Do those who work in the field feel fairly compensated for their work?
- Do I know anyone who could give me more insight into this line of work?

Start looking for sources of information to help you answer questions about the job you have chosen. Even though you might find it useful to surf the internet initially, you must

- a.) include at least **ONE** interview with a professional in the field or with an individual who has personal experience in the area being explored, **AND**
- a.) include at least **TWO** additional bibliographic citations from different sources at the library (books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles, lectures, videos, documentaries, specialty encyclopedias, or reliable databases).

Please note: **General encyclopedias and dictionaries do not count toward the required number** of sources, since they should be used only as sources of background information.

Find people to interview, set up appointments, and develop an organized list of questions to ask them.

Our Library Instructor will work with you to help you get to know some of the research skills and resources you will need to thrive in college and in life. He/she will also introduce you to ways of looking for journal, newspaper, and magazine articles, book chapters, lectures, etc. Be open to experimentation as you survey what's available at the library because *the material you find on your quest* should help you narrow your topic further. Carefully select and then photocopy (or print out) **AT LEAST TWO** articles, essays, or book chapters that are useful to your research. Write down all information that will allow you to construct an **MLA "Works Cited" page (Due Nov. 19)**. Recap:

- i.) **Find at least TWO articles/essays/chapters** that interest you.
- ii.) **Write down sufficient information** (author and title of work, journal, volume/issue, date of publication, etc.) about the article/essay/chapter you have found so that you can look for it in the library **AND** later write a proper MLA-style **"Works Cited" entry** (see Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers* online).
- iii.) **Photocopy or print out the two items and place them** (with your bibliographic information: i.e. MLA "Works Cited" entry) in your Research "Folder."

Step Three: Taking Notes and Watching out For Plagiarism

When you interview a person in the field,

- consider his/her busy schedule and set up your interview as early as possible
- realize that personal interviews are best, but phone and email interviews are also acceptable.
- plan your interview in advance and gather and read some background information on the job you have chosen
- write up questions that will get you the information you need to know
- arrange the questions in a logical manner, most important questions first
- don't waste time by asking questions to which you can readily find the answer elsewhere: keep in mind this person's particular areas of expertise and experience

Instructions to help make your interview run smoothly are as follows:

- be on time and be respectful of your subject's time and knowledge
- be honest about why you are conducting the interview
- ask if you may record the session, if you want to do so
- ask questions for clarification to be sure that you understand what your subject is saying
- ask your subject to spell any important names or technical terms
- ask your subject to repeat statements that you may want to quote
- stay on target and take careful notes
- ask whether you can call if you have further questions
- be polite: thank your subject for his/her time

Instructions to use when writing your essay are as follows:

- write down your thoughts and impressions immediately after you leave so that you don't forget them
- go through you interview notes and underline or highlight the important points
- plan to include the information you gain from your interviews as you do all other research material -- don't transcribe the entire interview into your final essay.

Remember to include the interviews on your "Works Cited" page.

When you conduct research at the library:

- remember to take very careful notes once you have gathered the material you will need.
- read carefully and write down any information you think you can use in your paper.

Here are some things I do to avoid plagiarism:

- I always put the original article or chapter away – and by that, I mean that I actually put the research in a different room from where I'm sitting down to write – before I begin writing anything that requires research. I make all of my assertions or claims based on the notes I have taken, and then go back to the other room to grab what I need as support for the points I want to make in my research paper. I always write first and then quote material.

Another hint to keep in mind is that as you take notes:

- record any useful information in a *Microsoft Word* file you set up under the file name "Support for Research." You may **paraphrase, summarize, or directly quote** relevant material in this file, but never cut and paste the material to your essay unless you *cite the sources of the information carefully*. (See your "Lecture Notes" for more about how to avoid plagiarism)

Step Four: Drafting a Thesis Statement, Making an Outline, and Writing your Paper

Once you have taken careful notes, draft a **tentative thesis statement** that will allow you to finish an outline of your main points. Look at your outline to make sure you have gathered enough support for every claim in your essay, and then write a **rough draft** of your essay that includes all of your research and MLA citations. Your thesis statement is due with your **"Works Cited" page and Outline on April 12**. Your Rough Drafts are due **April 28 and April 30**.

Step Five: Documenting Your Sources

Follow the "Recap" section under Step Two, and look through your library hand-outs, textbook, and the online version of Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers* for reminders about MLA-style documentation. We will also discuss documentation in class.

Format:

Your essay should be **2-3 pages in length**, typed using **proper essay structure and in the MLA format**, and be stapled to a **"Works Cited"** page at the end.

Also, your paper should (a.) be typed using **standard, white 8-1/2" x 11" paper**, (b.) be **double-spaced with a font size of 12**, (c.) include a **title, date, your name, and page numbers**, and (d) be **stapled ONCE on the left upper corner** of the final draft.

Submit a final draft that is "clean" or without evidence of any revisions from earlier drafts.