

# HOW TO WRITE THE RESEARCH PROJECT

## General tips about research and writing

- Research question** You should narrow down your topic area and concentrate on a specific issue. You should treat a clearly defined topic thoroughly, not provide a superficial treatment of a wide scope of material. You should start your work from formulating a research question, that is, what you will try to analyse or prove in your paper and why you are doing it. ("I will study ... because I want to find out how/why.... in order to understand/explain how/why/what ...") You should keep your research question in mind all through the reading and writing process.
- Research** After deciding on your topic and research question, you should start with research. You should consult some background material in the chosen field: books, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, magazines, journals, internet resources, etc. You will need both primary sources or the "raw materials" of your research (e.g., a film, TV programme or song) and secondary sources or the things other people have written about the issues you are studying. Primary sources are the texts (e.g., songs, advertisements) you will analyse in your work. Secondary sources will help support your ideas and should be cited selectively.
- Plagiarism** You should make a clear distinction between your ideas and those of other authors. Plagiarism, that is "borrowing" other people's ideas and/or words without referring to them, is a serious problem and any student caught plagiarising will be automatically excluded from the competition. Keep in mind that internet sources are also intellectual property and have to be referenced in the same way as printed materials. Do not be afraid to cite other people. It shows the thoroughness of your research and special credit will be given for a wide scope of background materials.
- Sources** You should try to look for up-to-date materials. Materials about societies and cultures date. When reading and doing research, look at the time when the book/article was published. We do not recommend materials that are more than 10 years old. You should have at least 5 different sources (books, articles, internet resources). You should keep your research question in mind when you do reading so as to not get carried away. It is impossible to read everything that has been written about a topic. Therefore you should focus on your narrow topic area. You should take careful notes while you read and carefully record bibliographical data.
- Drafting** You should start writing and drafting early on to avoid last-minute rush. You should be prepared to write several drafts and correct your thinking as well as language. Do not formulate the title before you have finished or are absolutely sure you are not going to change anything essential. Incompatibility between the title and the paper itself is one of the greatest shortcomings of a research paper.
- Structure** You should structure your paper clearly. You should state your research question or hypothesis in the introduction, proceed with analysing the topic and proving your point in the body paragraphs and sum up your views in the conclusion. You may but do not have to use subheadings.

**Revision** You should revise carefully. The first draft is never perfect and you should be ready to make corrections in the content, structure and the layout. It makes sense to leave at least a day between writing and revising—distance will allow you to see your own work more objectively. You should start revising from the level of arguments: make sure your arguments are logical and supported by facts. Then you should proceed to the organisation of your paper and, finally, language. You should make sure you use either British or American spelling and do not mix the two. You should also check the printed version of your paper to make sure everything is OK—you will never get a second chance to make a first impression.

## **Citation and references**

No research paper can consist of the writer's own ideas only. One of the aims of a paper is to demonstrate the author's familiarity with background material and research done in the field. Another author's ideas and words that are quoted, paraphrased or summarised should always be fully documented. You should refer to all sources—films, music albums, internet discussion lists, interviews. The fact that a work has not been published in the conventional manner does not give you the right to use it as your own.

**Quoting** Quoting means reporting someone else's thoughts word by word. Shorter quotations are given in regular font and enclosed in quotation marks, followed by the name of the author and the page number where you found the quotation (e.g., It has been said that "it is not easy to treat either American popular culture or British society as monoliths which are uniform in their structures, behaviours, and effects" (Strinati 76)). See appendix for more details. Longer quotations (four lines and more) should be set apart from the body of the text as block quotations, that is as a separate paragraph that is single spaced and given in a smaller font (point size 10). For example:  
Either Americanization is unthinkingly and cynically celebrated as another way of making money, Americanism representing the true spirit of capitalism, 'real capitalism' or, with more credibility and integrity, the values associated with it by the elite critics are adopted and endorsed precisely because of their clash with domestic elite cultural values (Strinati 52).  
All direct quotations should be followed by an in-text reference. You should use quotations sparingly. A text containing very many quotations is difficult to read and leaves the impression that the author cannot think for himself or herself. Quotations should be used when the author has worded something exceptionally well or when you want to analyse a specific sentence.

**Paraphrase and summary** In other cases, use paraphrasing or summary instead. In case of paraphrasing you should use your own words to express other people's ideas. In a summary you compress the original text considerably, using your own words. Although you are not using the words of another author, you should still cite your source! The list of all works cited should be added to the end of the paper under the title References (see appendix for full details).

## **Format**

- Length The research paper is **ten to fifteen pages long, double-spaced**.
- Font The text should be **computer-processed**, using **Times New Roman** font, **point size 12**. You may use larger point size for the title. Avoid artistic or flashy styles.
- Layout Paragraphs should be **indented** and text **justified**. Block style should not be used.
- Title page The research paper should have a **title page that includes the title of your paper, your name, the name of your supervisor and school and the year**.

Excerpted from Põldsaar, Raili and Türk, Ülle.1999. *Writing Research Papers and Graduation Theses in the Humanities and Social Sciences*(Tartu: Tartu University Press.)

For further reference consult: <http://www.ut.ee/fleng/?id=guidelines>