

Research Paper and Report Writing

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

OUTLINES AND THESIS STATEMENTS

Writing Your Thesis Statement

Directions To create a thesis statement for your own research paper, think about your research and your main idea.

1. My paper's main idea is _____

2. Some of the most important ideas I learned in my research are _____

Directions Review the approaches listed below. Which approaches would work best with your topic? Pick two of them. (If you are writing about a current problem, you might want to pick *point out a cause-and-effect relationship* and *define something*. If you are writing about famous works of art, you might select *compare and contrast* and *classification*.) Then write two thesis statements—one for each selected approach. Read the two thesis statements carefully. Which one expresses what you most want to say about your topic? Circle that statement.

- Explain how something works, using a step-by-step process
- Compare and contrast people, events, or ideas
- Define something
- Classify by dividing things into groups with common characteristics
- Point out a cause-and-effect relationship

3. Thesis statement one _____

4. Thesis statement two _____

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DRAFTING

Evaluating a Sample Draft for Introduction, Body, and Conclusion

Directions Read this draft of a research paper. Pay special attention to how the writer has organized the information into an introduction, a body, or the main part of the paper, and a conclusion. Then answer the questions on the next page.

In a world increasingly full of people and their creations, is there any room left for wild animals? It's true that many species have adapted to humans by feeding out of our garbage cans, perching on power lines, and nesting on billboards. But what about creatures that are shy and easily disturbed by people? What about species that need large undisturbed forests or plains in which to roam about and feed? One answer to saving these animals is to create wildlife refuges.

Over the past century many such sanctuaries have been created in the United States. In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt created the first federal wildlife refuge on Pelican Island in Florida. Today there are more than four hundred such refuges across our nation.

Many American refuges have been set aside specifically to help preserve an endangered species. The whooping crane can find a protected home at a Texas refuge called Aransas. The American buffalo can roam safely over the National Bison Range in Montana. In Indonesia rangers at the Ujung Kulon National Park protect the endangered Javan rhino from hunters. Wildlife refuges in the United States seek to promote the survival of wildlife but not necessarily to leave the natural environment completely untouched by humans. In many refuges hikers and other visitors are welcome to enter and observe the animals. In some refuges people are allowed to hunt, fish, and boat. Wildlife managers may dam up ponds, create nesting sites, or plant food crops to help a species survive.

Wildlife refuges are an important part of the solution to how humans and animals can live in harmony. Many species have been helped. Many visitors have been educated.

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1. What is the main idea expressed in the introduction?

2. What technique or techniques has the writer used to get the reader's attention in the introduction?

3. What are the major supporting details provided in the body of this report?

4. Can you find any information in the body of the report that doesn't fit the main focus of the paragraph in which it is located? If so, what is this information, and should it be moved or deleted?

5. Evaluate the conclusion. How could it be improved? Make suggestions, or write an improved version below.

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DRAFTING

Evaluating a Sample Draft for Statistics, Facts, Examples, and Quotations

Directions To make your paper interesting and meaningful, you need to support your ideas with statistics, facts, examples, and quotations gathered during your research. However, you also must give credit to the sources where you found your information. There are many ways to do this. One way is to write the reference to your source at the end of the sentence containing the information. The reference should appear in parentheses. It consists of the last name of the author(s) and the page number where the information was found. In the following example the information in the last sentence comes from page 54 of a book called *Places of Refuge: Our National Wildlife Refuge System* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia is a popular beach spot. It is also home to the piping plover, an endangered bird. Refuge officials realized that human activity was making it difficult for the birds to raise their young, so beginning in 1988 they closed two-and-a-half miles of the beach to humans during the birds' breeding season (Patent 54).

A reference in the paper needs to provide only enough information to identify the source. (The rest of the information from your source card will come later, in the source list at the end of your research paper.) In most cases all you need to provide is the author's name and the page where you found the fact or quotation. If your information comes from an unsigned article in a newspaper, encyclopedia, or other source, just list the name of the source and the page in your reference.

According to the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, species considered endangered as of July 30, 1992, included the masked bobwhite, the American peregrine falcon, the red wolf, and the American alligator (The World Almanac and Book of Facts 677).

Directions The research paper excerpt on the next page is based on information from the two sources listed below. Read the excerpt and then answer the questions that follow.

Madson, John. "American Waterfowl: Troubles and Triumphs." National Geographic Nov. 1984: 583.

Mackenzie, John P. S. Birds in Peril. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

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Can a species be pulled back from the edge of extinction? If you consider the case of the trumpeter swan, the answer would seem to be yes. The trumpeter swan is native to North America. It is a very large bird. For hundreds of years it was hunted, both for food and for its skin. By 1932 only sixty-nine trumpeter swans were known to exist (Madson 583).

In 1935 the United States government set up the Red Rocks Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in an attempt to save the trumpeter swan from dying out completely (Mackenzie 42). Today nearly ten thousand of these birds exist in the United States and Canada (National Geographic 583). This "most majestic of American waterfowl" seems to be safe from extinction.

1. Look in the excerpt to find an example of a statement that should be supported with precise statistics.

2. You only need to write the last name of the author and the page number where the material was found in a reference. Which reference in the excerpt is written incorrectly?

3. Most of the time, information that is in quotation marks needs a reference. Find an example of material in the excerpt that needs to have a reference but does not. Copy the text that needs a reference.

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Writing Your Introduction

Directions A good introduction does more than just introduce the thesis, or main idea, of a research paper. It grabs the reader's attention. One way to begin is with a question. Another way to open is with a surprising fact or statistic. Some writers interest their readers with a fascinating story related to the topic. Others start with a striking quotation. Think about the topic you have selected and the main idea you want to convey. Now develop one introduction for each approach listed below. Continue your introductions on a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

1. Question

2. Surprising fact or statistic

3. Story

4. Quotation

Directions Now review your four introductions. Which one do you like best? Explain why you prefer it.

5. _____

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