

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR BEFORE BEGINNING A RESEARCH PROJECT

It is easy to make assumptions about what your instructor expects for the research paper assignment. After all, you've probably written such a paper before and may have had the sense that the "rules" for doing so were handed down by the government. Unfortunately, those assumptions may get in the way of writing a good paper, and sometimes they are very wrong. If you received a handout describing the assignment, it may answer the questions below, but if not, make sure you raise them with your instructor when he or she gives you the assignment.

1. How would you describe the audience for this paper?
2. Do you expect the paper to be in a particular form or organized in a special way?
3. Or, can I develop a form that suits the purpose of my paper?
4. Do you have guidelines about format (margins, title page, outline, bibliography, citation method, etc.)?
5. Can I use other visual devices (illustrations, subheadings, bulleted lists, etc.) to make my paper more readable?
6. Can I use the pronoun "I" when appropriate?
7. Can my own observations or experiences be included in the paper if relevant?
8. Can I include people I interview as sources in my paper? Would you encourage me to use "live" sources as well as published ones?
9. Should the paper sound a certain way, have a particular tone, or am I free to use a writing voice that suits my subject and purpose?