



Fact Sheet: How to Write a Term Paper

Choosing a Topic and Formulating a Research Question:

I would recommend you to choose a topic that broadly deals with the issues we touched upon during the seminar, that you are interested in and that motivates you to work on the paper. The research question you decide for has to be sufficiently narrow and focused in order to avoid a too general and descriptive treatment. It should allow for both a theoretical and an empirical perspective on the topic. At the same time, it has to be manageable given the limited resources you are faced with. For this reason, you should also limit yourself to dealing with only one to two cases and selecting them carefully.

Structure:

A term paper is comprised of three main parts:

1. An introduction (~10% of the word count); therein, you should:
 - a. Delineate the topic and arouse interest for it
 - b. State your research question and explain why it is relevant
 - c. Mention the theories and methods you will use
 - d. Hint at the results of your paper without giving away the main arguments
 - e. Outline the structure of the paper
2. A main part in which you develop the argument of your paper, based on empirical evidence. The main part consists of several chapters and subsections which have to be well-structured. Make use of paragraphs in order to organize your thoughts wisely - please avoid paragraphs comprising only one or two sentences or more than half a page.
3. A conclusion (~10% of the word count); it summarizes your main arguments and thereby responds to the research question stated in the introduction. It is unlikely that you will be able to answer your question with full certainty, since 'the real world' can usually be interpreted in different ways. For this reason, it is important to be modest about one's results and to be explicit about possible limitations of the paper and alternative explanations. You can also include the implications of

your case study for the wider field of research or international politics in your conclusion. A good conclusion can have a disciplining effect, since it forces you to limit yourself to your research question and to omit sections that might be interesting but actually irrelevant for your paper.

Form:

Please pay attention to the following formal guidelines:

- In addition to the text body, your paper has to contain a cover page, a table of contents and a list of references
- On the cover page, please state the topic of your paper, your name, student ID number, E-mail address, course of studies, the submission date and the word count
- Include page numbers, except on the cover page
- Use Arial or Times New Roman, font size 12, 1.5 line spacing (except in footnotes), full justification (not left-aligned)
- Leave a margin for corrections on the right side of each page
- Write only in full sentences

Documentation:

Most important rule: Do not plagiarize! Every single time you use someone else's ideas or wording, making a reference is obligatory. Both the purposeful omitting of references and 'unintended' plagiarism are a grave breach with the principles of academic work and will not be tolerated. Papers in which plagiarism is detected are, without exception, graded with a 5.0. However, please do not infer that using another author's work is inadvisable and dangerous. On the contrary, you need to reference others in order to develop and prove your own arguments. Please stick to the guidelines below to make sure that your documentation is accurate.

For further guidance on how to quote correctly please take a look at our fact sheet on quoting and how to avoid rip offs.

List of References:

All the literature referred to in your paper needs to be listed in one single list of references. A list of references is not the same as a bibliography; hence, please only include work that is referenced in your paper. The list of references needs to be sorted alphabetically by family name. It is important that you attach a list of references even if you use the footnote style. In the following, the bibliographical information that has to be included in your references is listed for the most common types of academic work.

Books: Name of the author, year of publication, the full title of the book, place of publication, publisher

Chapter of an edited book: Author of the chapter, year of publication, title of the chapter, editor, title of the edited book, place of publication and publisher, page numbers of the chapter

Journal article: Author, year of publication, article title, journal title, volume, issue, page numbers of the article

Internet sources: Name of the author, year of publication, title, “retrieved from [link]”, “last accessed [date]”. It is very important that you do not only copy and paste the link.