Term Paper Writing: Elements and documentation

Introduction

Different courses may have different requirements for the writing of a term paper. You need to find them out and comply with them. This website introduces some common principles and elements for a proper term paper. Samples of standard format of English and Chinese documentation are provided for your reference.

1. *Components of a Term Paper*
2. *Guidelines for Preliminaries*
3. *Guidelines for Text*
4. *Guidelines for Reference Materials*

1. Components of a Term Paper

i. Preliminaries
   a. Title Page
   b. Abstract (if required)
   c. Table of Contents (if required)

ii. Text
   a. Introduction
   b. Main Body (Chapters or Sections)
   c. Conclusion

iii. Reference Materials
   a. Parenthetical Documentation
   b. Notes (if any)
   c. Appendix (if any)
   d. English References
   e. Chinese References

2. Guidelines for Preliminaries

2.1. Title Page

A title page contains:

    i. the title of your paper

    ii. your name and student number

    iii. the course name and code,

    iv. the instructor's name

    v. the due date

2.2. Abstract

An abstract is a brief summary of the main ideas of your term paper usually in about 100 to 200 words. The main elements are as follows:

    i. a short statement of your research nature or subject

    ii. a brief description of your general theoretical approach and research methods

    iii. a short summary of your main arguments and research findings

2.3. Table of Contents

A table of contents provides an analytical outline of your paper with the sequence of your presentation. A table of contents should list out:

    i.   the heading of every division of the paper

    ii. the subheadings of every subsection within the divisions (if any)

    iii. page number for every division and subsection

3. Guidelines for Text

3.1. Introduction

An introduction should be an interesting opening to show the main theme and specific topics of your paper. An introduction usually forms through:

    i.   a concise and complete statement of your research question or the general purpose of your term paper.

    ii.   a justification for your study (the significance)

    iii.   a background to your research question and a review of the relevant literatures on it (literature review)

    iv.   a brief statement of the sources of data, the procedure or methods of analysis (methodology)

    v.   a preview of the organization of the paper

3.2. Main Body (Chapters or Sections)

Since the topics of term papers are so diverse, it is impossible to give specific indications of how to write the main body of a term paper. But, the general rule is that you must organize your presentation in a logical framework with a clear conceptual linkage among sections and give every point with substantial support from concrete source.

3.3. Conclusion

A conclusion should provide a firm ending of what you have discussed in the paper and, preferably, further to reach a judgment, to endorse one side of an issue, or to offer directives. A good conclusion usually contains:

    i. a recapitulation of the main findings or main themes

    ii. statements about the specific values or alternative insights of your paper for understanding the subject matter

    iii. indications of the important relevance to the current circumstance or future possibility

    iv. suggestions for policy in points to your findings

4. Guidelines for Reference Materials

Different institutions have developed different styles of documentation. No matter which one you use for your paper, the principle is to be consistent. The format system provided. Here comes from the American Psychological Association (APA system).

4.1. Parenthetical Reference

A term paper must have a clear documentation of all reference materials used in the text. This requires that your paper must indicate from where you obtained:

 i. direct quotations

 ii. borrowed ideas (including paraphrases and summaries)

 iii. data and cases (if they did not come through your own research)

Sample:

 i. One work by one author

> If the author's name appears in the text,
>> Walker (2000) compared reaction times

> If not,
>> In a recent study of reaction times (Walker, 2000)

 ii. One work by multiple authors

> First citation in the text:
>> Wasserstein, Zappulla, Rosen, Gerstman, and Rock (1994) found

> First next citation in the text:
>> Wasserstien et al. (1994) found

 iii. One work by group as author

> Use the name of the group as the author
>> Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (1997) found

iv. Authors with the same surname

For one work by one author, show author's initials in all text citation:
> R. D. Luce (1959) and P. A. Luce (1986) also found

For one work by multiple authors, show the first author's initials in all text citation:
> J. M. Goldberg and Neff (1961) and M. E. Goldberg and Wurtz (1972) studied

v. Two or more works within the same parenthese

By different authors:
> Several studies (Balda, 1980; Kamil, 1988; Pepperberg & Funk, 1990)

By the same author:
> Past research (Gogel, 1984, 1990)

By the same author in the same year:
> Several studies (Johnson, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c)

vi. Specific parts of a source

One specific page:
> (Cheek & Buss, 1981, p.332)

More than one page:
> (Cheek & Buss, 1981, pp. 332-333)

A specific chapter:
> (Shimamura, 1989, chap.3)

4.2. Notes

The notes at the foot of each page are called as *footnotes*. The notes at the end of each chapter or at the end of the paper before other reference materials are called as *endnotes*. But, both formats and functions are the same.

i. Documentation notes

Footnotes or endnotes for reference documentation is seldom used now. In APA system, it is replaced by the parenthetical documentation form. If you would like to know how to use footnotes or endnotes for reference documentation, see *The research paper: Process, form, and content* by Roth (1986, chap. 8) or *Assignment and thesis writing* by Anderson and Poole (2001, chap. 11).

ii. Content notes

However, it remains common to use footnotes or endnotes for providing additional content in the text. Such footnotes or endnotes may:

a. include material which is not strictly relevant to the main argument while yet is too important to be omitted.
b. explain, supplement, amplify material that is included in the main text.
c. give cross-reference to other sections of a paper

4.3. Appendix

The purpose of appendix is to provide reader with detailed information which would be distracting to read in the main body of the paper. Usually, the information in an appendix is a large table, a long cross-reference to the text, a sample of a questionnaire or other survey instrument used in the research.

If your paper has only one appendix, you should simply label it Appendix; if your paper has more than one appendix, you need to label each one with a capital letter (Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, etc.)

4.4. English References

At the end of your paper, you must provide a reference list in an alphabetical order by the surname of the author. If you use the title Bibliography, you can list out both references cited in the text and the relevant works which have been consulted. If you use the title Reference, you should only list out the

references cited in the text.

General forms:

i. Book reference

> Author's name. (Year). Title of work. Location: Publisher

ii. A chapter or an article in an edited book

> Author's name. (Year). Title of chapter or article. In Editor's name (Ed.), *Title of book* (page numbers). Location: Publisher.

iii. Periodical (e.g., journal articles)

> Author's name. (Year). Title of article. *Title of periodical*, *Volume Number*, Page.

iv. Daily newspaper report or article

> Heading of the report or the article. (year, month and date). *Title of the newspaper*, page.

Sample: Book reference

i. A reference to an entire book

> Beck, C. A. J., & Sales, B. D. (2001). *Family mediation: Facts, myths, and further prospects.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

ii. Book in new edition (second, third, etc.)

> Mitchell, T. R., & Larson, J. R. (1987). *People in organizations: An introduction to organizational behavior* (3rd ed.). New York: Mcgraw-Hill.

iii. Edited book

> Gibbs, J. T., & Huang, L.N. (Eds.). (1991). *Children of color: Psychological interviews with minority youth.* San Francisco: Jossey-bass.

iv. Translated work

> Laplave, P.-S. (1951). *A philosophical essay on probabilities* (F. W. Truscott & F. L. Emory, Trans.). New York: Dover. (Original work published 1814)

v. Book, group author as publisher

American Bureau of Statistics. (1991). *Estimated resident population by age and sex in statistical area, New South Wales, June 1991* (No. 3209.1). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Author

Note. When the author and publisher are identical, use Author as the same of the publisher.

Sample: A chapter or an article in an edited book

Bjork, R. A. (1989). Retrieval inhibition as an adaptive mechanism in human memory. In H. L. Roediger III & F. I. M. Craik (Eds.), *Varieties of memory & consciousness* (pp. 309-330). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Sample: Periodical

Mellers, B. A (2000). Choice and the relative pleasure of consequences. *Psychological Bulletin*, *126*, 910-924.

Sample: Daily newspaper report or article

New drug appears to sharply cut risk of death from heart failure. (1993, July 15). *The Washington Post*, p. A12.

4.5. Chinese References

For paper written in Chinese, the format of reference documentation used by *Chinese Social Science Quarterly* (CSSQ System) is recommended. The details are as follows:

/

/   "   "

1.   1990   5   7
2.   1989   5-9
3.   1992
      5   8   12
4.   1990
      233
5.   13
      1991   9
6.   1991   462   464

7.   1991   2

8.   1970   2

9.   1990   23

10. Robert Gilpin, *Economy of Internation Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 5.
11. Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Red World Order*, Chatham House

Publishers, 1993, pp.5-10.

1.　　　　"　　　　　"　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　1992
　　33-44

2.　　　　　　"　　　　　　"　　　　　　　　　　　1992
　　　　18

3.　　　"　　　　　　　"　　　　1993　3　23　　6

4.　Robert Arts, "Power". J. Nye ed., *Power,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 23-35.

5.　Robert Gilpin, "War and Change", *International Organization,* Vol. 33, No. 4, 1993, pp. 45-55.

6.　Robert Knorr, "China: Third Economic Power", *New York Times*, June 10, 1992.

Selected bibliography

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Anderson, J., & Poole, M. (2001). *Assignment and thesis writing* (4th ed.). New York: Jon Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd.

Lester, J. D. (1990). *Writing research papers: A complete guide* (6th ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

Roth, A. J. (1986). *The research paper: Process, form, and content* (5th ed.). California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.