

GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS IN GENERAL

A. Nature of Papers: Descriptive or Critical

1. Comparison

	Descriptive	Critical (!)
Function	It merely says what happened or what another author has discussed.	It asks and answers questions, makes comparisons, and presents and defends a thesis or argument.
Objective vs Subjective	It provides an account of the topic	Rather than just stating the facts, this approach explains and interprets them.
Nature of Question	"What?"	(1) Why did events take place?
		(2) What were their consequences?
		(3) How did they relate to other developments?
		(4) Why did the authors you read take differing stands?
		(5) What is your own interpretation of the issues?

2. Be Critical

1) Say something of your own!

All our papers will be both descriptive and critical. Rather than just summarizing what happened or what you read, you are required to provide your own analysis of the topic or issue about which you are writing and to argue a thesis or conclusion. Be sure that you understand what each assignment requires, in terms of the balance between description, analysis, and argument.

2) Prove it!

Provide objective evidence and examples to buttress your analysis and arguments.

3) Be objective!

If you encounter material that does not agree with your position, you cannot just ignore it; instead you need to explain why you think that evidence is less important or persuasive.

B. General Format and Presentation

1. Cover Page

The paper's title, your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date should appear on a separate first page for long papers and at the top of the first page of text for short papers.

2. Three Sections

Your paper needs an introduction, a middle section, and a conclusion. These sections do not need to be set off with individual headings in a short paper but may be separated in a longer one.

	What You will Write
Introduction	It lays out your topic, states what your particular thesis or argument will be, and tells your reader how the paper will be structured--what points you will consider. You may also need to provide some background or context in the introduction.
Middle section	It presents your information and develops your analysis and argument.
Conclusion	It pulls together the main points, reasserts the thesis, and may relate the topic back to wider theological issues.

3. Page Numbering

4. Citation

Depending on the nature of the assignment, your paper may need footnotes (at the bottom of the page) or endnotes (at the back of the paper). It will almost certainly need at the end a bibliography of the works you used for the project. See the Referencing Guidelines.

5. Spacing and Fonts; Indentation

1) Double Spacing

Unless your instructor has given you other instructions, type your papers double-spaced, with margins of standard width (usually 1 inch on the sides and bottom and 1 1/2 inch on the top).

2) Use standard fonts.

Professors are fully aware that different fonts may be used to make a paper seem larger or smaller than it really is. Also, exotic fonts may be hard to read and grade.

3) Indent the start of each paragraph 5 spaces from the left margin.

6. Proofreading etc.

1) Proofread your paper carefully for spelling and typing mistakes.

A sloppy paper distracts attention from what you are saying and makes the reader wonder if your preparation for the paper and your thinking were careless too. If your word-processor has a spell-checker, use it, but remember that it will not catch typos that happen to be words (e.g., "marital" vs. "martial"). Correct any last-minute changes neatly in ink.

2) Staple your paper together (not paper clips or folded at one corner).

3) Keep a copy of your paper, either on disk or photocopied.

4) If your instructor has given any special instructions about the format of the paper, be sure to follow them.

C. Clarity of Organization and Paragraph Structure

1. Body → Sections → Paragraphs → Sentences

	Description
Large Picture	The body of your paper should be organized into several main sections, each of which deals with a given sub-topic, issue, or question within your general subject. In each section, you will have one or more paragraphs focusing on individual aspects of that topic.
Small Picture	A paragraph consists of a block of material about a particular subject or about a specific point, one of the issues that contributes to the development of the analysis or argument of the paper.
Clarity of the subject (Beginning)	Each paragraph should begin with a general topic sentence that indicates what subject the rest of the paragraph will discuss, what issue it will explore, or what point it will make. By reading just the topic sentences of the paper, your reader should be able to get a summary of the subjects you are addressing and the position you are defending.
Coherence (Content)	If your paragraph talks about several different subjects, it must either be divided up, so you can develop each point separately and effectively in its own paragraph, or be opened by a topic sentence that makes it clear that you want to mention briefly a variety of lesser points.
Body of Paragraph	The remaining sentences in each paragraph provide more detail or evidence about the main topic. A paragraph should develop the subject or point it is making; hence it normally contains at least three sentences in addition to the topic sentence and may have a concluding sentence as well. (Here formal writing differs from journalistic style, which often uses shorter paragraphs.)

2. Transitions: Let It Flow Smoothly!

- 1) Between sections you will need a transition or linking statement, indicating that you are moving on to a new topic.
- 2) Each paragraph within a section should also be clearly related to the one before and the one after, creating an even, logical flow. If the link is not readily apparent, you should include a sentence that describes the transition.

D. Acknowledging Your Sources (Referencing) and Academic Honesty

	Warnings
MUST	You must acknowledge the sources of all your information and any ideas or interpretations you have taken from other works. These references are usually placed into notes, with a bibliography at the end of the paper that lists all works used. See the Referencing Guidelines.
Plagiarism→ Automatic "F"	This serious academic offense can take many forms, including using another writer's phrase without putting it into quotation marks, not giving the source for a quotation, taking information from other works without acknowledgment, presenting other people's ideas as if they were your own, or submitting a paper that you did not write.
No Recycling	You may not use a paper you wrote for one course to fill an assignment in another class.

E. Primary Sources vs. Secondary Works

	Primary Sources	Secondary Works
Definition	It is a record left by a person (or group) who participated in or witnessed the events you are studying or who provided a contemporary expression of the ideas or values of the period under examination.	They are accounts written by people who were not themselves involved in the events or in the original expression of the ideas under study. Written after the events/ideas they describe, they are based upon primary sources and/or other secondary works.
Examples	Letters, autobiographies, diaries, government documents, minutes of meetings, newspapers, or books written about your topic at that time are examples; non-written sources include interviews, films, photos, recordings of music, and clothing, buildings, or tools from the period.	Thus, an early 20th-century theologian like you could prepare a secondary study of 1 Tim 3:16 through his or her reading of documents from that period.
Direct Quotations	When using primary sources, you may want to use a few more direct quotations, to illustrate the mood, language, or "flavor" of your sources. But even here, be sparing. A good rule of thumb is to quote only when you plan to analyze or interpret the passage; otherwise, paraphrase.	When working with secondary accounts, limit your use of direct quotations. In general, your paper will flow better if you paraphrase the statement, putting it into your own words. Quote only when you wish to call attention to the author's precise phrasing.

F. Quotation

1. Direct Quotations

- 1) Do not use a direct quotation as the topic sentence of a paragraph.
- 2) How?

	Explanation
Shorter than 5 Lines	Every direct quotation must be put into quotation marks and given its own individual reference , normally in a note.
Punctuation with quotation marks.	When ending a quotation in the text, a final comma or period always precedes the closing quotation marks, whether or not it is part of the quoted matter. Question marks and exclamation marks precede the quotation marks if they are part of the quoted matter but follow the quotation marks if they are part of the entire sentence of which the quotation is a part. Thus: The newspaper reported, "150,000 young people gathered in Denver." Should we accept its account of "a stupendous congregation"? Shorter quotations should be typed as part of the regular paragraph.
Longer than 5 Lines	Quotations of five or more lines need to be indented 5-8 spaces on each side and single-spaced. When you use this format, do not use quotation marks (but do still give the reference in a note).
Omissions	If you leave out words from a quotation, to shorten it or to make it fit into the grammar of your own sentence, indicate the omission by using periods with a space between each one. For gaps in the middle of a sentence, use three periods; for omissions at the end of the sentence, use four periods. E.g., "History can be fantastic"
Insertions	If you insert a word into a quotation, to increase clarity or adjust it to your own presentation, put the insertion into square brackets. E.g.: She commented that "by January . . . [the trees] looked sickly."

2. Indirect Quotations

An indirect quotation is when you present a direct quotation of the words of person A that you found in a book written by author B (that is, author B was himself quoting person A). In such cases, you must give both sources in the reference that accompanies the quotation.

G. Writing in Formal English

While most of us speak in casual or colloquial English, it is important to learn how to write formal English too. Our normal conversational style differs in many respects from formal written English. Your ability to write effectively will be one of the most critical factors in getting a job or being accepted for further training. Hence it is worth working on your formal writing skills while you are in college.