Kinds of “Research” Papers

The term “research paper” is a broad label. The assigned type of paper varies with levels and teachers. Section 162 to 292 in our classroom text Writing for College by Writers Inc publishers provides a good description of all kinds of research papers, such as:

- Factual Compiled Report [based on gathered sources about timely, interesting topic]
- Interview Report [such as the I-Search]
- Observation Report [based upon personal sensory impressions and note taking]
- Personal Research Report [presents a writer’s investigation into a subject based entirely on primary (firsthand) methods of research]
- Analysis of a Process
- Comparison of two subjects [ideas, events, objects, experiments, etc.]
- Literary criticism/analysis
- Evaluative Research Paper
  - Cause/Effect Paper
  - Problem/Solution Paper
  - Position/Argumentation paper [based on outside sources]
  - Opinion paper [using no outside sources directly]

Types of Sources

Your research will be based upon one of two basic types of sources:

- **Primary** resources are materials that are contemporary to your subject – an interview, a survey response, personal letters, and original experiments.
- **Secondary** resources are those secondhand materials written later about someone or something. These are usually the sources used for the research you are doing.

Characteristics of Good Topics

Personally/Widely Interesting  Manageable/Specific  Available  Worthwhile  Original

Characteristics of Poor Topics

Too broad  Too narrow  Too trivial  Too subjective  Too controversial
Too familiar  Too technical  Too factual  Too new  Too regional