

The Purpose of Research Writing

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you'll learn about why it's important to conduct meaningful research about writing projects. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Reasons for Research

Why was the Great Wall of China built? What have scientists learned about the possibility of life on Mars? What roles did women play in the American Revolution? How does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories? Who invented the game of football, and how has it changed over the years?

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting the library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

When you perform research, you are essentially trying to solve a mystery—you want to know how something works or why something happened. In other words, you want to answer a question that you (and other people) have about the world. This is one of the most basic reasons for performing research.

But the research process does not end when you have solved your mystery.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Imagine what would happen if a detective collected enough evidence to solve a criminal case, but she never shared her solution with her colleagues.

Presenting what you have learned from research can be just as important as performing the research.

2. Research Writing and Academic Papers

Research results can be presented in a variety of ways, but one of the most popular and effective presentation forms is the research paper. A research paper presents an original thesis about a topic and develops that thesis with information gathered from a variety of sources.

IN CONTEXT

If you are curious about the possibility of life on Mars, you might choose to research the topic. What will you do, though, when your research is complete? You will need a way to put your thoughts

together in a logical, coherent manner. You may want to use the facts you have learned to create a narrative or to support an argument. You may also want to show the results of your research to your friends, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines and journals.

Writing a research paper is an ideal way to organize thoughts, craft narratives, or make arguments based on research, and then share your newfound knowledge with the world.

No matter what field of study you are interested in, you will most likely be asked to write a research paper during your academic career.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A student in an art history course might write a research paper about an artist's work, while a student in a psychology course might write a research paper about current findings in childhood development.

Having to write a research paper may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and writing a long paper requires a lot of time, effort, and organization.

However, writing a research paper can also be a great opportunity to explore a topic that is particularly interesting to you. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice, and the writing process helps you remember what you have learned and understand it on a deeper level.

3. Research Writing at Work

Knowing how to write a good research paper is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, or learning about challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration.

You may even need to create a written report of your findings. And because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally.



THINK ABOUT IT

Take a few minutes to think about each of the following careers. How might each of these professionals use research and research writing skills on the job?

- Medical laboratory technician
- Small business owner
- Information technologist
- Freelance magazine writer

A medical laboratory technician or information technologist might do research to learn about the latest technological developments in either of these fields. A small business owner might conduct research to learn about the latest industry trends. A freelance magazine writer may need to research a given topic to write an informed, up-to-date article.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the main **reasons for research** are to answer specific questions, share your findings with others, and increase your understanding of challenging topics. You also learned that **research writing and academic papers** are closely linked because these papers are often the most effective way of presenting research. Finally, you looked at how you can apply **research at work** by thinking about the different ways that professionals may use research skills in their daily lives.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "The Purpose of Research Writing" tutorial.