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Choosing a Subject for a Research Paper

Choosing a Subject for a Research Paper

A research paper formally presents information that answers a question. It is important to know how to research and write a paper. Many high school and college classes require research papers in order to pass classes, and some jobs require employees to research and write about their findings.

The first step to developing a good research paper is to choose a good topic. Here are four guidelines for choosing a good subject:

- Make sure the subject is not too broad. For example, a broad topic such as airplanes would have too much information to cover well in one research paper.
- Make sure the subject is not too narrow. There may not be enough information for a research paper about the five-lined skink, for example. A better choice would be to write about salamanders in general.
- Make sure your teacher approves your topic. Some topics may expose you to wrong teachings.
- The subject should be something you understand and are enthusiastic about. Your enthusiasm will convey through your writing, making your research paper more interesting.

There are several potential research topics related to your usual interests. Your hobbies—cars, woodworking, hunting, collecting, or reading, for example—may give you a subject for a research paper. Or you could use this time to explore something that you have always wondered about but never really took the time to study. You could even develop a topic from a genre of books you read often. For instance, if you read a lot of stories about pioneers, you could write a report about some aspect of pioneer life.

All of the ideas listed above are only suggestions. If you still cannot think of a topic to write about, explore the following list.

caves—uses, types, exploration
structures that animals build
endangered animals
a climate type (arctic, desert, etc.)
ancient (before Christ) inventions
how service or police dogs are trained
weather forecasting
an explorer
clothing (history, style, or manufacture)
the history of a type of food: such as bread or cheese

animals that use camouflage
the history of communication
Halley's Comet—or other celestial bodies
a national park
the history of a religion
the Apollo program (moon landings)
an inventor and his invention
an occupation



Lesson 1

- **A** List three subjects you might like to write about. Number them in the order of interest.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Review

- B** Put brackets around each noun clause. Write *s*, *do*, *pn*, or *op* to label its function.

4. _____ Fred talked about what we should do in an emergency.
5. _____ I just read that a human hair is ten times bigger around than a capillary.
6. _____ The decision was that anyone over sixteen could sign up.
7. _____ Give this sack of groceries to whoever answers the door.
8. _____ That everyone survived the accident unhurt was a miracle.

- C** Write *participial*, *gerund*, or *infinitive* to label each underlined phrase.

9. _____ Reading about the cold and snow in Alaska makes me shiver.
10. _____ Grasping the squirming fish in its mouth, the fox scurried from its perch on the bank.
11. _____ The huskies, seeing a moose on the trail, refused to take another step.
12. _____ Travis enjoys studying about the history of Alaska.

- D** Diagram the sentence.

13. A day of rest is what our bodies need.



Spelling – Patterns

Spelling Words

affect	counterfeit	facade	forfeit	ratify
artifact	deficiency	facilitate	nullify	sanctify
beneficial	effect	faculty	proficient	sufficient
certificate	efficient	feasible	qualification	surfeit

This section of spelling contains words derived from the Latin word *facere*, “to make; to do.” There are too many roots formed from this word to list here; some of the common ones are *fic*, *fac*, *fec*, *feit*, *feas*, and *fy*.

E Write the spelling word that fits each description.

14. _____ a document proving that its holder has a certain skill or level of education
15. _____ able to be done; reasonable
16. _____ producing results without wasting time, energy, or materials
17. _____ to help something happen or make it easier to occur
18. _____ the teachers of a school
19. _____ give up; lose the right to something
20. _____ excess; overabundance
21. _____ as much as is needed
22. _____ something produced by a cause; result
23. _____ to influence or change
24. _____ to set apart as sacred; to make holy
25. _____ to make of no value
26. _____ a false front; an artificial appearance
27. _____ an object remaining from a certain period
28. _____ made to imitate something genuine or official; forged
29. _____ lack of a vital substance

F Write the Section 1 spelling words in your notebook.