

Background Research

Informational Paragraphs and Works Cited (i.e. Background Information)

The library is a wonderful resource for background information. Students are encouraged to have their own library card and password. Students should consider checking out books from the library and using the online GALE database for research.

Three library sessions at school have been scheduled for research. Students will learn where resources are located in the library, how to access World Book Online, how to use Gale Database, and how to use the colored fill-in-the-blanks works cited pages. The school does have numerous books that will be available for use during library time, but these books will not be available for check until the end of the week in order for all students to have access to them throughout the week. In addition to the three library days, students will also have two full science class periods to work on their informational paragraphs. Extra time might be available in computer and English classes.

\$\$\$\$ Students can print 5 copies a day in the library for free from the computer. After that, the copies are 5¢ each. Copier usage is also 5¢ per copy. Students are encouraged to bring some change.

Information from the internet should be PRINTED off and hole-punched to be placed in the science fair research notebook under the 4th section titled "Research Info." By doing this, students can highlight important information instead of taking hand-written notes. This SAVES a lot of time!!! The highlighted notes do not have to be written in the journal, but a journal entry should be written to annotate what was done that day. Pages from other sources such as magazine articles and books could also be copied on a copier and highlighted to save time! Notes are required to be written in the journal if the information is not printed and highlighted. (Note: **Wikipedia is not allowed as a source.**)

General Information

- The **first draft** should be written in ink in the **journal**. Skip lines in the journal to allow for self-editing. Use red pen to show revision marks.
- **The paragraphs do not include your question, procedure or any other part of the investigation.** The paragraphs do not answer the question, but give background information which will help strengthen knowledge related to the topic in order to develop a thorough investigation. Background information is information already known about your general topic. The report is a **FACTUAL** report!
- **Plagiarism** is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own. It can be deliberate or accidental. Plagiarism of any kind will result in a 50% penalty, and then the report would have to be rewritten honestly.

Ask yourself:

- Are you using someone else's original ideas or words?
- Or is the information "common knowledge" (information that anyone could find or know from a number of general sources)?
- Or is the information your own thinking and expression?
- If you are quoting, did you quote accurately and include quotation marks around your quoted material?
- If you are putting someone else's words or ideas in your own words (**paraphrasing**), did you use your own words and sentence structures? Does it sound totally unlike the original writing?

You should:

- Give the complete publishing information about your source in the works cited page at the end of your paper.
- Paragraphs should include general knowledge and definitions. (Definitions are normally written for clarification in a paragraph and NOT a separate paragraph.) Historical information, scientists who have made an impact in the field, impact of the topic on society, drawings/diagrams, and current theories and explanations could also be included if relevant to topic.

How do you know what to research???? **THE NOUNS!**

- Locate the key words [noun(s)] in the question itself to research.
- The “nouns” are the bulk of what is needed for research.
- The “verb” can also be defined for clarification.
 - **Example 1:** Does the **pH** level of a **substance** have an effect on the normal **corroding** process of **iron**? (3 paragraphs minimum)
 - Research pH. (1 paragraph)
 - Research iron and properties of iron. (1 paragraph)
 - Research the substances to be tested. (1 paragraph)
 - Define corrosion. (probably included in the iron paragraph)
 - **Example 2:** Can **additives** be added to the **soil** to reduce the occurrence of **mud flows**? (3 body paragraphs)
 - Research soil. What makes up soil? What is soil? (1 paragraph)
 - Define additives. Research the additives that will be used. (1 paragraph)
 - Research mud flows. (1 paragraph)
 - Define reduce. Define occurrence. (possibly)

Journal

- Date journal entry.
- Title journal entry “Keywords for Background Information.”
- Rewrite your question.
- Circle/Highlight the nouns/verbs in the question.

Works Cited

- The works cited are the sources that were **ACTUALLY USED** in writing the paragraph.
- Sources include dictionaries, letters, specialized encyclopedias, encyclopedias, interviews, newspapers, magazines, Internet, database, etc.
- A minimum of **FIVE** CITIATIONS must be used, with a minimum of **THREE** different source types.
- The works cited for levels 1 and 2 are the fill-in-the-blanks colored sheets provided in the library. Level 3 participants will also use these same sheets for planning, and then they will be required to type their works cited on a separate sheet of paper using the MLA style. ALL levels could do the MLA works cited page for 5 points extra credit.

Works Cited Reminders:

- Did you double-space each line?
- Did you put your citations in alphabetical order?
- Did you indent second and third lines ½ inch?
- Did you end your citations with a period?
- Did you title your citations as Works Cited, centered on the page?
- Did you use 12-font, Times New Roman?

