

Name: _____

Writing an I-Search Paper

Notes from online resource: *Writing an I-Search Paper*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

The last time you wrote a research paper, you were probably directed to a topic. For this project, you will choose a topic that has immediate relevance to your life – a topic about which you have a genuine need or a real desire to know more. **This should relate in some way to your potential career path or interest(s).** This personal research paper is called an I-Search paper.

This project will consist of 3 sections:

- ❖ **The story of the search** – This section tells readers what you knew about your subject before you began your research, what you wanted to know, and the research steps you went through to find out what you wanted to know – including both the steps that led to useful information and the steps that turned out to be dead ends.
- ❖ **What you learned** – In this section, you give readers the results of your search – both the answers you found and the answers you did not find.
- ❖ **Your reflections on the search** – Use this section to tell readers what the experience has taught you about conducting and documenting a search.

STEP I. SELECT A TOPIC

The I-Search paper is usually more personal than a traditional research paper. The purpose, however, is the same – to find information. The difference is that the topic for an I-Search comes from a personal need to know something. It is very important that you choose a topic that you truly want to investigate.

Your goal is to find a topic you want to know something about - one that is driven by a real desire or need in your life. You should be able to locate information on your topic from a variety of outside sources. The information can not come only from your knowledge and experience. For example, one student who discovered he had asthma felt he needed to know everything he could about disease and its possible effects on his life.

Here's how to generate a topic:

1. **Use trigger phrases to help you think about certain subjects. Just fill in the blanks.**

I always wanted to know how to _____.

I need help with _____.

2. Take inventories of your lifestyle, personality, aptitudes, and preferences.

3. Make a list of priorities. Include the factors that have the greatest impact on your life, including family, health, economics, education, law, and so forth.

STEP II: FORM A RESEARCH QUESTION

To avoid gathering information you can't use, focus on one key aspect of your topic. The best way to do this is to form a research question – a question that asks exactly what you want to find out from your research. You shouldn't be able to answer the research question with a single word. It should be a question that gives rise to several more detailed questions. Ask yourself the following questions:

What is my topic? This can be one word. <i>(Sample: My topic is asthma.)</i>

Why am I interested in this topic? Write this as a complete sentence. <i>(Sample: I have asthma, but I want to have a full, active life.)</i>

What do I hope to learn from my research? Write your answer as a complete sentence. <i>(Sample: I want to learn whether I can keep my asthma from interfering with my life. If I can, I need to know how.)</i>

Research Question: Write your question as a complete sentence. <i>(Sample: Can I manage my asthma so that I can lead a full, active life?)</i>

Once you develop a research question, divide the big question into at least five more detailed questions.

Samples:

What can I do to keep playing sports and doing other physically demanding activities?

Are there certain foods and plants I should avoid?

How do different environments affect my asthma?

What kinds of medications are available for people suffering from asthma?

Is there some kind of physical conditioning I could do to lessen the effects of asthma?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

After forming your research question and subdividing it, you will have a specific goal for your research. Focusing the question allows you to gather relevant information and dismiss any information that has nothing to do with the topic.

STEP III: SHARE YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

To get the search off to a good start, spend time in small groups to discuss each other's research questions. Discuss ways to improve the questions. Make suggestions about how to find information. Gather at least 4 comments/suggestions from those in your group.

1.
2.
3.
4.

STEP IV: START A SEARCH JOURNAL

You will need to record your daily progress so that you can write the story of your search, which is the first part of the paper. This is called a **Search Journal**. You can keep this in a folder in Google Docs and upload it Google Classroom.

On the first page, list the following items:

1. Your research question
2. Your focus questions
3. The feedback from your group -- at least 4 remarks and/or suggestions
4. Things you already know about your research topic
5. Things you want to learn
6. Your preliminary research plan

Write in this journal every day, starting today. Include the date, a brief listing of that day's research findings and results (including successes and failures), and your thoughts.

Sample Journal

<i>Date</i>	<i>Research Findings and Results</i>	<i>Thoughts on my progress</i>
<i>1/7</i>	<i>I found a web site about asthma and downloaded information about the causes of the illness. LINK to the article</i>	<i>So far, so good. Getting information has been easy. I'm pretty sure I will be able to use this article</i>

1/8	<p>I wanted to interview my doctor about my illness, but she was out of town. I read a pamphlet from the library instead.</p>	<p>I waited too long to call for an interview. I think I'll be able to get the interview in before the paper is due.</p>
1/9	<p>I found another online source about athletes who have asthma. I also read an article online about the history of asthma. LINK to the article</p>	<p>I'm excited about the article on the athletes. I think the article on the history is interesting, but it doesn't really pertain to my research questions</p>