



# THE DOCUMENTED ESSAY

## Research Checklist

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR PAPER

- Will your paper be the kind your instructor asked for?
- Do you have enough material for a sound discussion?
- If the subject is controversial, have you been careful not to ignore awkward facts that do not fit neatly with your ideas?
- If the subject is timely, is your material recent?
- Have you narrowed your focus so that you can discuss your subject in convincing detail?
- Are your bibliography cards complete and accurate?
- Are you sure you have not unconsciously plagiarized or misleadingly quoted material out of context on your note cards?
- Have you organized your notes in a logical order by content?
- Have you skimmed your notes again to refresh your memory on what you have to work with?
- Does this rereading indicate that there are no gaps requiring further information?
- Do you have a thesis that guides the organization of your material?
- Have you worked out the order in which the separate parts should be presented to develop a thesis?

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE DOING THE FINAL DRAFT**

- Have you given enough evidence to support all generalities and conclusions?
- Have you discussed the subject objectively?
- Does your discussion move forward smoothly?
- Does it come to a convincing conclusion?
- Is the diction (choice of words) appropriate?
- Are the transitions into and after quotations smooth?
- Have you worked out unnecessary wordiness and awkward phrases?
- Have you checked the mechanics?
- Have you proofread the paper carefully?

## **QUOTATIONS**

- Are they accurate?
- Are you sure you have not plagiarized or misleadingly quoted material out of context?
- Have you used appropriate ellipses, insertions, and square brackets?
- Have you used the correct forms for short and long quotations?

## **CITATIONS**

- If you are using MLA or APA documentation, have you noted the author's or authors' surname(s) and page number(s) in parentheses after the quoted or paraphrased information?
- Have you checked page numbers to be sure they are correct?

- If you are using Chicago or Notes-Bibliography documentation, have you footnoted for all quotations, facts, and ideas (even paraphrases) derived from your reading?
- Have you used the correct form: author's name in normal order (first name first)? titles of articles enclosed in quotation marks? titles of books and periodicals italicized? required publication facts included?

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Are items alphabetized by author's last name?
- Is the name of the first author in each listing reversed, last name first?
- Are the facts of publication complete?
- Have you used proper spacing, punctuation, italicizing?

## **TITLE PAGE**

- Does the title page include the title of the paper, the course number, the professor's name, and the date of submission?

## **TROUBLESHOOTER'S CHECKLIST**

### **IF YOU:**

### **HAVE YOU:**

<p>—have no idea what to write about</p>	<p>—read your course text thoroughly?</p> <p>—checked references in the bibliographies of those texts?</p> <p>—asked the reference librarian for help?</p> <p>—read basic reference materials in the field (find these by asking your instructor, using computer data bases, consulting bibliographies)?</p>
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<p>—have a subject area and a general topic but no focus, no point of view, or no thesis</p>	<p>—read primary and secondary material and noted your reactions?</p> <p>—done any brainstorming?</p> <p>—used a tape recorder to record ideas as they occur to you?</p> <p>—asked probing questions about the material?</p> <p>—written some tentative thesis statements which express a response to the material?</p> <p>—stated the topic as a problem to be solved?</p>
<p>—have a topic with a focus or a proposition but can't generate enough supporting material</p>	<p>—honestly done all your reading and research?</p> <p>—made notes on note cards?</p> <p>—probed key concepts by describing, defining, explaining, analyzing, evaluating, looking for cause and effect, comparing, contrasting?</p> <p>—supported generalizations with details: facts, illustrations, examples, analogies, incidents?</p>
<p>—have a proposition with a lot of material that you can't organize</p>	<p>—written down supporting ideas and grouped them into categories?</p> <p>—eliminated all ideas that do not relate to your thesis?</p> <p>—tried making a simple point-by-point outline?</p>
<p>—have trouble anyway</p>	<p>—signed up for help at the Reading/Writing Center?</p>