

Due 11/12/2015



The I-Search Paper

What is an I-Search Paper?

An I-Search paper is a unique kind of research paper, probably different from research papers you have done in the past because it involves relating a compelling story about the process of your research, as well as your findings. You will select a topic, identify what it is you already know about that topic and then develop questions to help you complete the necessary research for the essay. Your final essay will tell the story of your hunt for information, provide answers to the main research question and establish a solid thesis for your paper. Ultimately, the content you include from your research must be valid and appropriate, but the way in which you tell the story of how you acquired your research must be engaging as well.



What is the goal of an I-Search Paper?

The goal of the I-Search is to conduct a serious inquiry into a topic of your choice. The paper, however, is not only about the answers you found but also about how you came up with those answers. (Yes, this means you may use "I" throughout the paper.) Therefore, the goal is to chronicle and narrate your experience as a researcher and relate your findings and your journey in a well-organized and engaging essay.

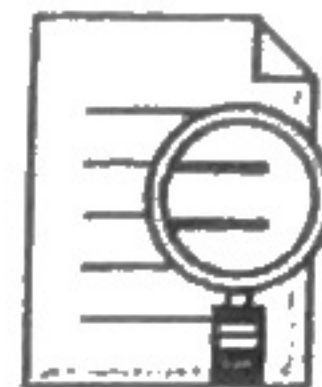
What are the differences and similarities between a standard research paper and an I-Search paper?

A Research Paper:

- Examines a topic in depth
- Formal document
- Written using academic structure
- Numerous sources
- No personal information
- Emphasis on final product

What is an I-Search paper?

- Examines a topic in depth
- ✓ Informal document
- ✓ Written in personal, narrative form
- Numerous sources
- ✓ Includes personal information
- ✓ Emphasis on process of research



What are the general requirements for the I-Search paper?

- An interesting topic approved by your teacher
- 6-8 pages, not including title or works cited pages
- Conduct a face-to-face interview with an expert
- All 4 sections completed
 - Introduction & Getting Started
 - Searchings & Findings
 - Reflection
 - Works Cited
- Proper bibliography with at least 6 sources
- MLA style (Modern Language Association)



What else do I need to know before I get started?

- You need to come up with a topic.
- Follow the due dates listed on the calendar (online and in the classroom).
- ~~You need to create your own I-Search story.~~
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- Follow the due dates posted on the calendar!

What are the sections to this research paper?

A good way to organize an I-Search paper is simply to tell the story of what you did in your search, in the order that everything happened. Do not tell everything, only the happenings and facts crucial to your hunt. Do not lecture your readers but take them along on a journey.

The framework for the I-Search

Introduction/Getting Started

- Hook readers immediately. Begin with an attention-getting statement about your topic, and explain why it was important for you to find out more about it.
- Explain what you already knew about your topic.
- Tell what you wanted to know about your topic. Briefly mention the most important information and ideas you already knew about your topic.
- Tell What You Wanted To Learn and Why
- Let readers know what you wanted to find out about your topic and the reasons motivating your search.
- Include a thesis statement. Turn your research question into a statement and add the factors that complete the statement. (This may also appear in the Search Results section.)

The Search Story

- Retrace your research steps. Describe the sources you began with and the ones you found later. Discuss successes and setbacks and any changes to your original research question.

The Search Results/Findings

- Discuss Your Results and Give Support
- Describe important results of your research.
- Devote at least a paragraph to each important research result. Support your findings with direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of information from your sources.

The Reflection on Your Search

- Describe what you learned from your research experience.
- Discuss how your experience and your new knowledge might affect your future.
- Remind readers of your thesis statement.

First
Things
First

What do I need to do first?

First, you will need a topic.

Remember that an I-Search paper is still a research paper, so the purpose is the same - to find information. The difference is that the topic for an I-Search comes from a personal need to know something—that is what the “I” in I-Search. It is very important, then, for you to choose a topic that you truly want to investigate. Remember, 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. Here are a few ways to generate ideas for a topic if you do not already have one in mind.

Brainstorm a list of several topics.



Then, circle the one you want to research.



Use trigger phrases.

The phrases below are called “trigger” phrases because they prompt you to think about particular subjects. To use these phrases, write them down and fill in the blanks with whatever comes to your mind.

I always wanted to know how to/more about/what happens when....
I need help with...

When you select a topic, be sure that it is a suitable one. It should be not only interesting and informative, but also lend itself to research. In other words, you should be able to locate adequate information on your topic from a variety of outside sources. If the information on your topic comes only from your knowledge and experience, there is no need for a search.

One student who discovered that he had asthma felt he needed to know everything he could about the disease and its possible effects on his life.

What is my topic?

My topic is asthma.

Why am I interested in this topic?

I have asthma, but I want to live an active, full life.

What do I hope to learn from my research?

Basically, I want to learn whether I can keep my asthma from interfering with my life. If I can, I need to know how.

Research Question:

Can I manage my asthma so that I can lead a full, active life?

Research Question: Can I manage my asthma so that I can lead a full, active life?

(The answer to the "research question" is what will eventually become the thesis for the paper.)

Once you begin to search for answers to your research question, step back from the question every so often and ask yourself if you need to revise your question slightly or come up with a completely new one. Such changes are a natural part of the research process.

Once he had developed a research question, the writer then divided his initial question into several more detailed questions, all having a direct bearing on how he could manage his asthma so that he could live normally.

- What can I do to keep playing sports and doing other physically demanding activities?
- Are there certain foods or plants I should avoid?
- How do different environmental conditions affect my asthma?
- What are the effects of pets on 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?

How can you get started?

Find Sources



(print)



(online)



(interview)

As you conduct your research, you will be looking at two basic sources of information **primary** and **secondary**.

- **Primary sources include legal documents, letters, diaries, eyewitness accounts, and surveys.**
- **Secondary sources are interpretations of primary materials written by other authors.**

For example, if a historian studied diaries, letters, official military records, and eyewitness accounts to write a biography of a famous general, he would be using primary sources. If that same historian consulted material from other biographies of the same general or from history books that included material about the general, he would be using secondary sources. The first place to begin your search is your school library, but you should also consider your community library and any college or university libraries in your area. Although your search might start at the library, it certainly should not end there. Check out community resources, including the Internet, and do not forget the various government agencies—local, state, and national—that might be valuable sources. Along those lines, part of your research will include finding a credible expert and conducting a face-to-face interview with him or her.



Start a Search Journal.

It is important to keep a daily record of your research process so that you will have this information when you write the story of your search. To record your daily progress, start a **search journal**.

Write in your search journal every day, starting today. Include the day's date, a brief listing of that day's research results and findings (include both successes and setbacks), and a short daily reflection on your progress. A record of your research process will be invaluable when you begin to write your paper. A well-kept journal can provide everything you need for the story of your search, the first section of your paper.

Consider the following as you take notes. How did you first start your research? What process did you use to begin your research? What types of searches did you try and how did they turn out? Describe the steps you took in your thinking/brainstorming. What questions did you ask yourself to get your thinking started? For example, you will describe what sources you began with and how these led to further sources. Another significant part of this section is the introduction of the expert interview. You will describe who you decided to interview and why you chose that person. What can they possibly offer to help with your searching?



Write Your Thesis Statement.

Your **thesis** is the main idea of your report. You write this after or as you answer your overall research question for the paper. It is the answer to your research question. The writer who began with the research question *Can I manage my asthma so that I can lead a full, active life?* found through research that the answer to his question was "yes." He could lead a full and active life if he carefully managed certain factors that had a direct bearing on his asthma.

To frame his thesis, he turned his research question into a statement and added the factors he would have to consider in order to manage his asthma. By adding these factors, he developed a short summary of the results of his research.

ASTHMA THESIS:

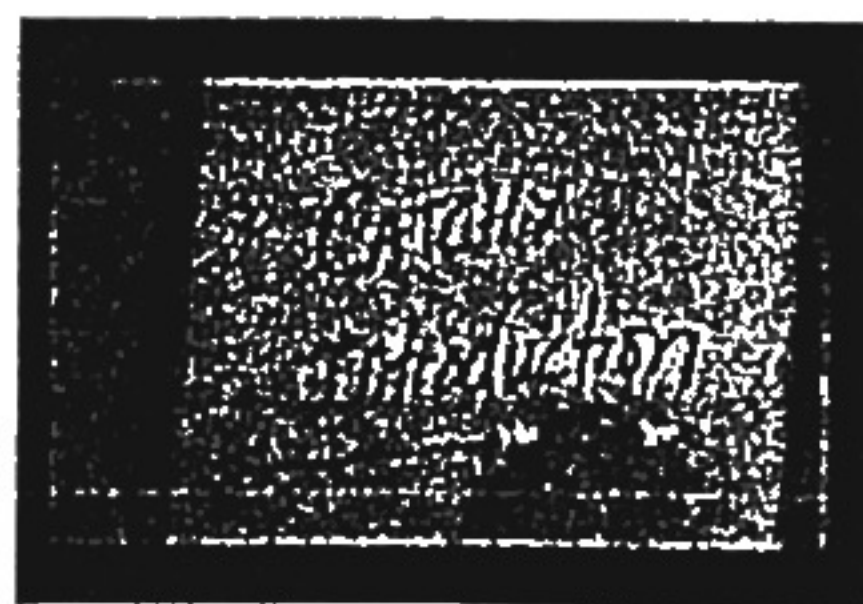
I can manage my asthma so that I can lead a full, active life by following my doctor's instructions on medication, by avoiding pets, by sticking to an exercise program, and by minimizing the effects of allergens that can trigger asthma episodes.



When should I start writing a rough draft?

When you have your thesis, and you have completed researching at least six (6) sources, you are ready to start writing your paper. Of course, you will also have to stick to the assignment schedule listed on the calendar, but if you finish your research early, you may get started writing early.

I am ready to write the introduction. Now what?



Introduction & Getting Started – (1-2 pages)

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. Evaluate each of the individual sources you found and how the information was pertinent to your research.

In this section, you will include the following:

- A description of your topic
- An explanation of why you chose it
- An explanation of how you got started

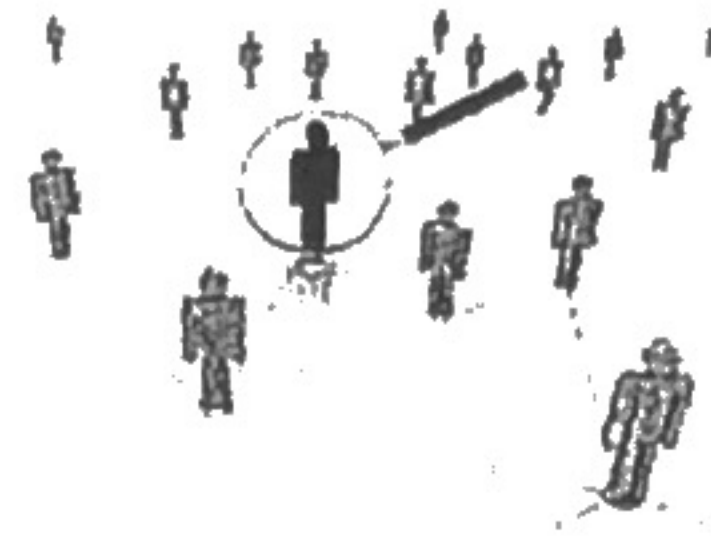
Use the ideas questions listed below as a guide to helping you construct this part of the paper:

- Tell the reader about something in your past that led to your being interested in it now. Relate that situation that led you to decide to research this topic. In other words, why did you become interested in this topic? What personal connection helped you to select it?
- Tell the reader what you already know or do not know about this topic.
- Tell the reader what you want to know about this topic.
- Why are you writing this paper?

**YOUR PAPER SHOULD HAVE *PERSONAL STATEMENTS THROUGHOUT.*
FOR INSTANCE:**

I wondered...
I thought.....
I did not know....
I knew....
I was surprised to find out.....
I expected.....
I wanted to see....
It was hard to....
It was easy to.....
I still didn't.....
I still want to....
Next time I will.....
Didn't find....
Was happy to find....
I was glad that I...
I was frustrated because.....

I am ready to tackle the "story of my search" section. Now what?



Searchings & Findings — (3-4 pages)

This is the longest section of the I-Search paper. Focus on the major sources of information you discovered during your research. This is the story of your hunt for information. Essentially, this section should deal with the following:

- **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.

In this section, you will include the following:

- Discuss how the information you found may have answered your questions, or raised new ones, or pointed you in different directions.
- One of the sources is also the interview, so include the significant information learned through the interview. Remember, the "I" in I-Search means that you must write in first person and be an interactive, reactive participant in the I-Search writing process. It also means you must make direct references to the important ideas from your sources and incorporate these direct quotes from the text of your sources

I am ready to tackle the "reflection" section. Now what?



Conclusions — (1-2 pages)

This is the reflection section of your paper. Here is where you reflect upon the entire search experience, not only what you got out of it, not only what you have learned, but how this search has changed your life.