

Sample I-Search Paper / Format

I My Question

In this introduction to your I-Search project, the student should start by identifying the question they chose to guide their research. The theme of the question should be “success.” The topic the question addresses should be one that the student is curious about or one in which the student has a high level of interest. See the direction sheet for sample questions. You may choose one of them or create your own depending on your needs.

As well as identifying the question early in this section, the student should clearly and thoroughly state why the topic of their question is of interest to them. Is it a future career choice? Is it something you have always been curious about? Explain why.

Students should then discuss whatever prior knowledge they have with the topic. Write about what answers you think you already know or may find out during your research with regards to your question. Using “I” in this section is completely acceptable and necessary.

It is important that you be thorough with all the parts in this section. Notice that the heading “My Question” is typed first before writing. Also, notice that the paper is double spaced with one inch margins in standard 12 font type. This section should roughly be about a page in length.

II My Search Process

In this section, the student writes a narrative about the entire research process step by step. The student would actually write something like “I started off by Googling my topic and did not have any success finding useful websites. I decided to talk to my parents to see if they had any ideas. They advised me to talk to the high school librarian which I did the following day. The librarian I spoke with directed me to some great resources which I found to be very

useful in the completion of this project.” This would continue until the student has completely described their journey through the completion of this project. It is perfectly acceptable to describe all the successes and challenges you faced along the way. Because it is written as a narrative, the student may use “I” throughout this section as well.

If the Research Log Sheet provided in class is used well by students, it will greatly improve their ability to remember the process of their research. Having this sheet in front of them will allow students to simply put their entries into narrative form for this section. Many log entries along with fully explaining them in this section should provide each student with more than enough information to write at least a page for part II.

III What I have learned

This is the only section that will look like a traditional research paper. “I” should not be used in this section because you are explaining what the “experts” had to say according to your research. Parenthetical documentation should be used as necessary as you would in any other research paper. As always, MLA format rules apply to paraphrasing, quotations, and documentation. Check out the NPHS IMC website and the NPHS Writing Guide (link is on the IMC webpage) for information on how to do everything correctly according to MLA format.

This part of the I-Search project should be pretty lengthy (at least a page) as proof of the extensive research the student has done. Keep in mind that the legitimacy of each source should be of concern especially if the source was found online. At least five sources should be used. No general encyclopedias are to be used as official sources. You may use them (this includes Wikipedia) to give you ideas but you cannot use them as one of your five sources.

To be thorough for this section of the paper, students should try to focus on three or four major findings from their research and then expand upon each. More than three or four are fine

as well. The student should make it obvious in this section that they did a thorough job of researching the topic. The student accomplishes this through the quality and quantity of information presented. The student should also expand on what areas you would have explored if you had more time.

IV What this means to me

This last section of the paper gives the student the ability to reflect on the things they have learned over the course of this project. Questions a student may answer in this section include: What is the biggest thing the student learned from this project? Did what the student thought they knew (as stated in section 1) match what the experts said? How does / will the information learned effect the student's future decisions or behavior? How did the student like this type of project as compared to a traditional research project? Did it have value? Certainly the student does not need to stop there. The student should write whatever comes to mind in this reflection portion. Using the word "I" is ok once again in this section because the student is reflecting on their own personal thoughts. This last section should also be around a page in length.

V Works Cited

All entries are to be done in MLA format. The following are reminders:

1. Entries are not numbered.
2. Entries are listed in alphabetical order based on the first letter that appears in the proper MLA format of the source.
3. Entries are double spaced and indented after the first line as needed.
4. All sources should be credible. No general encyclopedias - this includes Wikipedia - can be used.
5. Although not mandatory, student should try to vary the types of sources used to hit their topic from a variety of angles. This is a necessary part of good research.
6. All sources used must be listed. Minimum of five needed.