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GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION

It is the desire of the teaching staff of Louisiana Baptist University that its students write quality compositions, reports, essays and dissertations. For this purpose, the *Guidelines for Writing Assignments* handbook has been designed just for you.

Please READ the entire handbook BEFORE beginning the required course assignments. Answers and explanations to most questions should be found within the pages of this guide. For more extensive information we suggest the latest edition of Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

When we say..... we mean

Definitions:

- A. **Abstract** – a brief descriptive summary, of the dissertation. The abstract should include a statement of the problem or issue, a brief description of the research method and design, major findings and their significance, and the conclusions. Because the abstract is not part of the dissertation, it is neither numbered nor counted as a page.
- B. **Assignment** – A paper written one (1) to two (2) pages in length on a given subject. A paper with three or more pages required is considered to be a composition, student should refer to "D".
- C. **Bibliography** - A systematic and comprehensive listing of works, refers not only to the section within a book that lists works cited or consulted for the study, but also to book-length compilations of bibliographical entries on a given subject.
- D. **Composition** – An artistic literary work exceeding three (3) or more typewritten pages. Must include title page, outline and for any additional resources or quotations use endnotes and/ or footnotes and bibliography.
- E. **Diction** – The diction, or word choice, in a research paper should be formal rather than colloquial.
- F. **Dissertation** – A research paper submitted by a candidate for the doctoral degree. This paper requires more research and more extensive development of ideas than a Master's thesis. A doctoral dissertation should make an original contribution to knowledge in the field through presentation of new conclusions, previously undiscovered materials, or new methods of analysis.(see pgs. 16-17)
- G. **Documentation** – Each fact or opinion obtained from a source, whether quoted directly or summarized, must be documented with a footnote or with endnotes. Notes may be in one of two forms: footnotes or endnotes. Footnotes are placed at the bottom of the page that contains the material to which they refer. Endnotes are

- grouped together in a separate section at the end of the paper.
- H. **Essay**- a short literary composition on a single subject
 - I. **Endnotes** – Documentation notes appearing at the end of the text are endnotes. Endnotes appear after the text starting on a new page numbered in sequence with the preceding page. With some exceptions, documentation notes provide the same information as bibliographic entries but differ in form.
 - J. **Footnotes** – Documentation notes appearing at the bottom of relevant pages are footnotes. Footnotes appear at the bottom of pages, beginning four lines (two double spaces) below the text.
 - K. **Outline Page** – Presents a topic or sentence outline including the thesis and conclusion statement.
 - L. **Parenthetical Citation** – Citing with parentheses calls for two steps: citing each source in parentheses as you use it, and making a list of Works Cited at the end of your paper—an alphabetical list of all the sources you have used. In the text of a paper, a brief reference, enclosed in parentheses, indicating that material is borrowed and directing the reader to the source of the material. When citing a source, using either direct quotation or a summary, include within the text enough information, but no more than is necessary, to identify the source. Most parenthetical citations include the name of the author and the page number, without an intervening comma.
 - M. **Prospectus** – A document describing the major features of a literary work, etc., in enough detail so that it may be evaluated by the Academic Committee.
 - N. **Report** – A thorough record or description of the results of firsthand experience, empirical studies, or reading in primary sources. A report should be one (1) to two (2) pages in length. Use heading example on page 8.
 - O. **Research paper** – A paper based on work in the library from an essay, which usually draws on common knowledge and the writer’s personal experience. The writer of a research paper carefully documents the

sources of information and conclusions presented in the paper. The library paper assigned in undergraduate courses is most often labeled a research paper.

- P. **Thesis** – A substantial research project and should draw an original conclusion based on information derived from research. American usage generally reserves the name thesis for the Master’s paper or the undergraduate honor’s paper.
- Q. **Title**- The name of your assignment/report.
- R. **Title page** – Should include the title of the paper, the student’s name, the course and section, the instructor’s name, and the date. (see pg. 19 for example)
- S. **Tone** – Your tone, or attitude toward your subject, should be serious, not ironic or flippant.
- T. **Work cited** – Works cited appears at the end of the paper. An alphabetical list of all the sources used.

SUBMITTING AN ASSIGNMENT/REPORT

The submission of an assignment/report to the instructor for evaluation and final grade should include:

- A. All writing assignments/report must be typed (typewriter, word processor, or computer – using size 12 font) and double-spaced on plain white paper (size 8 ½" x 11").
- B. A writing assignment/report (2 pgs. or less) does **NOT** need a title page.
- C. A writing assignment/report (2 pgs. or less) does **NOT** need an outline.
- D. At the top right-hand corner of the first page, type your name, professor's name, course name/number, assignment number, and the date on separate lines, single-spacing between each. Double-space again and center the title. Double-space again between the title and the first line of the text. **DO NOT** underline your title or put it in quotation marks or type it in all capital letters. (See Example 1)
- E. The second page should have, at the top right-hand corner, the student's last name and page number. (See example 2)
- F. Each written assignment should be stapled or otherwise securely bound.

Example 1

1 inch margin on all sides	Student's name
	Professor's name
	Course name and number
	Assignment number
	Date
	How to Study the Bible
First Line of text	

	(1/2 inch from top)
More text	Last name – page number

SUBMITTING A COMPOSITION

The submission of a composition (three or more pages) to the instructor for evaluation and final grade should include:

- A. Title page (see example, page 22)
- B. Thesis statement/outline/conclusion statement
- C. Final draft
- D. End and/or footnotes
- E. Bibliography

Your composition:

- A. Must be typed (typewriter, word processor, or computer – using size 12 font) and double-spaced on plain white paper (size 8 ½" x 11"). Margins must be one inch on all sides.
- B. Must include an outline showing at least two main headings, one level of subheadings, an introduction, and a conclusion. Do not number introduction and conclusion as main points.
- C. Must include a works cited listing of a sufficient number of resources unless a number is requested in the assignment instructions. The listing of resources is not to include more than one encyclopedia-type source.
- D. Must contain the number of pages and/or words required in the assignment instruction.
- E. Should be proofread and corrected. Copies submitted for evaluation and grading should be clean and neatly typed.
- F. Should be stapled or securely bound.

You, the student, should approach the writing of each assignment as though expecting the finished work to be published. (Completing courses, English Composition I and English Composition II, will ensure a better understanding of what is expected in a college-level paper.

WRITING A COMPOSITION

- A. Identify your subject.
- B. Narrow the scope of your subject.
- C. Formulate a thesis statement
 - 1. State the purpose of the paper
 - a. A statement of thesis expresses the main point (controlling idea) of your composition by making a precise, specific assertion about the topic.
 - 2. State the thesis in one sentence
 - a. You should be able to state your main point in one sentence.
 - b. It should be specific: the kind of statement that promises to reveal something new.
 - c. Should be stated in the introductory paragraph of your paper word for word.
 - 3. Example:

Though some people may be drawn to acting by the prospect of winning applause and acclaim, or working closely with others, I love it because playing someone else gives me a vacation from myself.
- D. Research the material
 - 1. Look for items and concepts relevant and applicable to your thesis.
 - 2. Seek evidence, statistics, quotations, illustrations, and examples.
- E. Outline the material

(The outline covers only the body of the essay, omitting the introduction and the conclusion. The beginning and the ending are important in the essay itself, but you need NOT include them in the outline.)

 - 1. After deciding how to arrange your major points, you must decide how to connect the minor points to the major ones. The best way to plan your connections is to make an outline.
 - 2. Do not mix different kinds of topics and points-single words, phrases, or sentences- in the same outline.

The key to an effective outline is consistency. Try to

make your topics and points parallel and equal in importance.

3. Capitalize only the first word in each heading (also, any other words that are normally capitalized). In a typical outline, punctuation is usually unnecessary.

Example Outline: (The topic = *Why I like Acting*)

THESIS SENTENCE: Though some people may be drawn to acting by the prospect of winning applause and acclaim, or working closely with others, I love it because playing someone else gives me a vacation from myself.

- I. Common reasons for wanting to act
 - A. Working closely with others
 - B. Getting name on program
 - C. Getting applause
 - D. Drawing a crowd
 - E. Winning compliments
- II. What I love most about acting
 - A. Seeing myself as someone else
 1. Seeing another's face in the mirror
 2. Hearing another speak through me
 3. Seeing other characters react to my character
 - B. Helping create an imaginary family
 1. Relating to wife
 2. Relating to children
 - C. Vacationing from myself
 1. Like children's games of make-believe
 - a. Dressing up as Batman, etc.
 - b. Making up roles with other kids
 2. Like traveling

(Besides listing points in order of rising importance, this outline groups them under headings that show their relation to each other and to the thesis. Points that were at first jotted down in a random list have now become the skeleton of an essay.)

- F. Write the first draft
- G. Proofread and correct the first draft
- H. Rewrite the essay for submission

INTRODUCING YOUR COMPOSITION

- A. Composing a title
 - 1. The title should be short but sharply focused on the main point of the essay.
- B. Writing an introduction

(An *introduction* draws readers into the world of the essay, stating the topic and often the thesis sentence. It makes a commitment that the rest of the essay delivers.)

 - 1. A good introduction must forecast what will follow, and it can do this in a number of ways.
 - a. Lead up to an explicit statement of your thesis.
 - b. Define a conflict, problem, or question you aim to resolve
 - c. Tell a story that illustrates the main point you will go on to make.
 - d. Move from a generalization to a specific case.
 - e. Indicate the method of your essay
 - f. Explain the position you aim to oppose.
 - g. Establish a historical context for your topic
 - h. Challenge a widespread assumption or stereotype.
- C. Shaping the middle paragraphs

(The body of the essay is its center, the part offering ideas and supporting details, examples, and reasons to develop the thesis and thus fulfill the commitment of the introduction.)

 - 1. A paragraph is usually a block of sentences set off by spacing or indentation at the beginning.

2. Use each of the headings in your outline as the topic of a paragraph.
3. To forecast the main point of a paragraph, start with a lead sentence – a sentence that tells the reader where you are headed. The lead sentence is sometimes the topic sentence of the paragraph.

D. Ending your composition

(The conclusion generally gives readers something to take away from the essay—a summary of ideas, for instance, or a suggested course of action.)

1. Make the implications of your thesis explicit. The final thesis statement should cover all the points made in the paper.
2. Echo your introduction in terms that widen its significance.
3. Recommend a specific course of action.
4. Reflect on the experience that the essay records.
5. Reaffirm your thesis with a telling example.
6. Answer a question posed by the introduction.

EDITING YOUR COMPOSITION

Preparing and Submitting your final copy

- A. Are your sentences rhetorically effective? (vigorous, concise, emphatic, well-balanced, and varied.)
- B. Always check for the redundant use of words, pronouns, and/or phrases.
- C. Always check your choice of words
- D. Always check your grammar
- E. Always check your spelling, capitalization, and apostrophes
- F. Proofread your essay
- G. Proper documentation of endnotes and/or footnotes and bibliography.

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

- A. Plagiarism is presenting the words or thoughts of another writer as if they were your own. Statistics other than those you have compiled yourself should be attributed to the appropriate source. You commit plagiarism whenever you use a source in any way without precisely acknowledging what you have taken from it.
- B. Four ways of plagiarizing are:
 - 1. Word-for-word, continuous copying without quotation marks or mention of the author's name.
 - 2. Citing the author but copying many words and phrases without quotation marks, so that the reader has no way of knowing who has written what.
 - 3. Paraphrasing the passage—expressing its meaning in your own words—without mention of the author's name.
 - 4. Taking the author's idea without acknowledging the source.
- C. Whenever you use source material in any way, you must clearly signal just where the source material begins.
 - 1. Use quotation marks to signal the beginning and ending of any material you quote.
 - 2. Use the name or some other reference to the author to signal the beginning of any source material that you summarize or paraphrase—that is, restate in words of your own. If the source material is anonymous or unsigned, use a phrase referring to the author or source.
 - 3. If you combine paraphrase with quotation of the exact words, use both signals in turn.
- D. Parenthetical citing after each use (put in information using examples)
- E. Quoting guidelines
 - 1. Quote selectively

2. Quote accurately
3. Use ellipsis dots (...) to show that you have deliberately omitted words. You may omit words only when leaving them out does not change the basic meaning of the original.
4. If you underline or italicize anything that is not underlined in the original, say so in parentheses.
5. Use brackets to insert explanatory words.
6. Unless the quoted matter is perfectly clear by itself, explain its context as you introduce it.
7. Whenever you quote less than a complete sentence, make it part of a complete one.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE WRITING

- A. Most research papers should be written in the third person—that is, with nouns or third-person pronouns (he, she, they, or it) as subjects of the sentences.
- B. The first-person pronoun (I, we, me, us, my, our, mine, ours) is appropriate when you relate a personal experience, such as your own process of research, or when you wish to call particular attention to your opinion as distinguished from the view of others.
- C. Because your reader will assume that you are addressing him or her, second-person pronouns (you, your) rarely belong in a research paper.
- D. Do not use abbreviations in the text of a research paper.
- E. If a number must begin a sentence, spell it out.
- F. All pages of the text of a research paper should be numbered, including the first page. Position numerals in the upper right-hand corner one inch from the top of the page, flush with the right margin. We recommend placing the name of the writer before the numeral without intervening punctuation, such as “Jones 2” (optional in a dissertation). Double-space to the first line of the text.
- G. The title page is counted but not numbered.

- H. Anonymous is never used as an author entry in a bibliography or works cited list.
- I. To invigorate your writing style:
 1. Vary the length and structure of your sentences.
 2. Use verbs of action instead of be.
 3. Use the active voice as much as possible
 4. Ask Questions.
 5. Cut any words you do not need.
- J. Avoid the redundant use of words and/or pronouns.

MASTER OF ARTS THESIS REQUIREMENTS

The thesis is completed in conjunction with the Master of Arts degree program. The student is to work with his/her advisor in the completion of the project. The following requirements apply to everyone who is in the Master of Arts program.

1. The first step in writing a thesis is to receive approval for the subject and title. Before any actual writing is done, the student must submit an outline, which follows the format in the handbook *Guidelines for Writing Assignments*. The outline should contain the thesis subject and title. Upon approval, the student may proceed with the research and writing of his/her work under the advisement of his/her professor.
2. Your thesis must contain a cover page, acknowledgments (optional), a table of contents, **endnotes or footnotes**, bibliography, and a personal profile. All formats should follow the handbook, *Guidelines for Writing Assignments*, which may be retrieved from LBU.
3. Your thesis must show competent mastery of your chosen discipline and be acceptable in form and content to the Dean of the Graduate School. **It is necessary that the work be done of publishable quality.** The thesis must exhibit originality and thoroughness of research and must be an exhaustive treatment of the subject chosen. The form of the thesis must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. In addition, the graduate student must present his/her research in an acceptable and correct grammatical style. Mere technical form is not enough; the material should reflect the high quality of research and knowledge expected of graduate students.
4. The project must be approximately 25,000 words or 75 double-spaced typewritten pages, **printed on one side only**. The paper size must be 8 ½ x 11. **There are absolutely no exceptions.**

5. A preliminary draft of your thesis must be sent to Louisiana Baptist University with attention to your advisor for approval and corrections (if necessary). The draft will be sent back to you for any editing. If editions are made, then the student must resubmit the preliminary draft for final approval.
6. Since your work will be on display at Louisiana Baptist University for others to view, **one professionally bound, hardback copy** must be sent to Louisiana Baptist University. Your hardback must be similar to binding found on a library book. The title and author must be printed on the cover and spine. For binding purposes papers should be indented 1 ½ inches on left margin only. The last page of the thesis should be your personal profile or résumé with a recent wallet size photograph of yourself. Cut-outs, glue-ons, etc. will not be accepted. If your final project is submitted in a three ring binder or folder the work will not be accepted.

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

The dissertation is completed in conjunction with the degree programs for Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Theology and Doctor of Ministry. The student is to work with his/her advisor in the completion of the project. The following requirements apply to everyone who is in the doctorate program.

1. The first step in writing a dissertation is to receive approval for the subject and title. Before any actual writing is done, the student must submit a dissertation prospectus. The prospectus should contain the dissertation subject and title, a brief statement about your method of research and expected outcome, along with an outline. Upon approval, the student may proceed with the research and writing of his/her work under the advisement of his/her professor.
2. Your dissertation must contain a cover page, acknowledgments (optional), an abstract, a table of contents, **endnotes** or **footnotes**, bibliography, and a personal profile. All formats should follow the handbook, *Guidelines for Writing Assignments*, which may be retrieved from LBU.
3. Your dissertation must show competent independent content to the doctoral committee and the Graduate School. **It is necessary that the work be done of publishable quality.** The dissertation must exhibit originality and thoroughness of research and must be an exhaustive treatment of the subject chosen. The form of the dissertation must be approved by the doctoral committee. In addition, the graduate student must present his research in an acceptable and correct grammatical style. Mere technical form is not enough; the material should reflect the high quality of research and knowledge expected of doctoral projects.
4. The project must be approximately 50,000 words or 150 double-spaced, typewritten pages, **printed on**

one side only. The paper size must be 8 ½ x 11.
There are absolutely no exceptions.

5. A preliminary draft of your dissertation must be sent to Louisiana Baptist University, with attention to your advisor, for approval and corrections (if necessary). The draft will be sent back to you for any editing. If editions are made, then the student must resubmit the corrected draft for final approval. Students should present their drafts in sections rather than one complete document. This allows greater involvement of the faculty advisor in your dissertation project.
6. Since your work will be on display at Louisiana Baptist University for others to view, **one professionally bound, hardback copy** must be sent to Louisiana Baptist University. Your hardback must be similar to binding found on a library book. The title and author must be printed on the cover and spine. For binding purposes pages should be indented 1½ inches on left margin only. The last page of the dissertation should be your personal profile or résumé with a recent wallet size photograph of yourself. Cut outs, glue-ons, etc. will not be accepted. If your final project is submitted in a three ring binder or folder the work will not be accepted.

RESEARCH TIPS

With today's technology, it is very easy to conduct quick and productive research within a matter of minutes. Below are some helpful tips for retrieving the information you need:

- A. **Internet:** a rapidly growing means of accessing vast amounts of information. Simply type in the subject you are interested in researching and it will do the rest for you. The internet may provide libraries from around the world, specific documents, and even encyclopedias. If you have access to the internet at home or in your office, this is a fantastic way of finding anything and everything you need.
- B. **Library:** most libraries have computers with links to the internet. If so, start your research here before spending time at the card catalog. The internet will provide information your local library may not have.
- C. **Other theses or dissertations:** sometimes the best way to gain information is to look at a colleague's work. Their research may help you determine which route to take and where to look for your information.
- D. **E-mail:** If you know the e-mail address, then writing to the author of a particular text, or to a person with authority in your field of interest will also help in retrieving information for research. He/She will most likely give you some other resource ideas.

Sample Title Page

(8 single spaces from top of page)

TITLE OF THESIS

(11 single spaces)

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Louisiana Baptist University

(8 single spaces)

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for
Master of Arts
in
Christian Education

(10 spaces)

By

John Doe

August, 1999

