

# TRUE NORTH COLLEGE

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**IDENTIFY. EQUIP. RELEASE.**  
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## Writer's Handbook

## Table of Contents

What Should My Submitted Paper Look Like?	3-5
Title Page	3
Body	3-4
Works Cited Page	5
What Should My Essay on a Test Look Like?	6
How Can I Make My Writing Better?	7-8
What is a Process for Doing a Research Paper?	9-10
How Do I Do Research?	11-12

## What Should My Submitted Paper Look Like?

The usual order of “sections” in a submitted hard-copy paper is: title page, body or content of paper, and works cited page (if applicable).

1. Any paper submitted to fulfill a course requirement at True North College should have a TITLE PAGE. The title page should include the title of your paper set in a large font and centered on the paper. In the lower right corner in a much smaller font and single spaced should appear your name, the instructor’s name, the name of the course and the date.
2. Of course, a paper will have content; the BODY. Formatting The body of the paper should follow the formatting requirements include:
  - Margins = one inch margins all around.
  - Page numbers = starting on the second page in the bottom right hand corner within in the margin (footer) to include name and page number (Jones 2).
  - Font = 12-point Times New Roman.
  - Line spacing = double spaced.
  - Justification = left justified only.
  - Widows and orphans = there should not be only one line of a paragraph that stands alone at the bottom of a page (the first line of a paragraph) or at the top of a page (the last line of a paragraph). Set your word processor to include “Widow and Orphan Control” (under the Format/Paragraph tab).
  - Citations (see syllabus for examples).
    - Citations appear in parentheses and include the author’s last name followed by the page number without a comma in between (Jones 128).
    - All quotes must be followed by a citation. Content not quoted but deemed to be the sort in which you are indebted to the author should also be cited.
    - Quotes or citable content that includes the author’s name should only include a page number within those citations
    - Sample citations:

There are multiple ways to understand “the intricacies of anonymity and its impact on society especially as it pertains to the uneducated” (Doe 258).

Doe asserts, “anonymity is life” (142).

Anonymity is most easily avoided by those who have a propensity to shout (Doe 78).

- If the source has two or three authors, include all names in the same order they appear on your works cited page followed by the page number (Jones, Baker, and Smith 84).
- When using websites that do not have page numbers only include the last name of the person most credited with the website content (Miller).
- When citing more than one source from the same author, use the last name followed by a shortened version of the title in italics with a comma in between and then the page number with no comma in between to distinguish between sources:

(Jones, Salvation 285).

(Jones, Justification 32).

- Bible citations are not abbreviated, are placed in parentheses, and only include the version used the first time it is appears in the paper:

(John 3:16, NASB).

THEN

(Luke 4:10).

- Citations are inserted after quotation marks and before the period to end a sentence:

“Jesus wept” (John 11:35)

- Quotations
  - Quotation marks are placed outside of periods and commas
  - Quotation marks are placed inside of all other punctuation marks unless those punctuation marks are themselves part of the quotation.
  - All content that is placed in quotations must be cited.
  - Content that is not placed in quotations (not directly quoted) but should clearly be attributed to its source must be cited (specific/unique ideas, explanations, arguments, etc.).

3. The final page of a paper – for any paper that includes citations – is the WORKS CITED PAGE. The bibliographic information for all sources that are cited in a paper should be included in the works cited page.
- Sources are listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name or by the first word found in the in-text citation if the work has no author.
  - The first line of an entry is not indented but if the entry carries over to the next line(s) each line is indented five spaces.
  - The entire works cited page is double-spaced (no additional space between entries).
  - The Bible is not included on the Works Cited page.
  - Sample works cited page:

#### Works Cited

Doe, John. The Beauty of Anonymity. Anonymous Press International, 2019.

Drake, Shirley. "Where Were the Dead Sea Scrolls Found?" USA Today 24 October 2018: 7-8. Print.

Smith, Jane. "The Advantage of Popularity: The Meaning Behind an Interconnected

Society." New Vision Quarterly, vol. 25, no. 3, 2001, p. 48.

Taylor, Stanley. "Qumran and the Essenes" biblicalarchaeology.com, 17

May 2012. Web

<<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.com/periodical/academic-inter-testamental-palestine-sects-site.html>>

## What Should My Essay on a Test Look Like?

An essay written for a test will usually require between 150-200 words. In any case, an essay should include an initial 3-5 sentence paragraph that serves as an introduction designed to clearly propose a thesis statement (what you will be trying to explain, prove, argue for, or describe) and state the points you will be making. The following paragraphs (2-3) constituting the body of your essay will develop those points in route to defending your thesis.

Each paragraph in the body of your essay should begin with a topic sentence that clearly states the point you are going to make in that paragraph. There should be a clear flow of thought within each paragraph as well as a logical flow of thought across paragraphs. In a short essay there is no need for a separate paragraph for a conclusion. A one sentence conclusion statement is sufficient at the end of the last paragraph.

The following points of suggestion/direction represent “secrets” for writing effective essays on tests:

- Plan before you write. If the essay questions are made available to you, then be sure to build a general plan for how to answer each one. If the first time you see the essay questions is when you sit down to take the test, it is still important to make a plan. Here you will need to take some time before diving into the actual writing to decide on your thesis statement and jot down a basic outline reflecting how you want to order your answer (Secret #1 = Do not start answering the question until you have an answer).
- One of the most common errors students make in answering an essay question on a test is not answering the question. Instead of specifically answering the question, the student writes about the issue or topic including a variety of information relating to the question but not actually answering it. This “thematic” type of answer leaves the reader saying, “I have been given information that relates to the question in some sort of general way but the question itself has not been answered (Secret #2 = Answer the question).
- It is essential that your essay is structured in both its content and format. Paragraph divisions help the eye to see structure without even seeing content yet. Within each paragraph there must be a clear flow of thought. The writer should be intentional in his or her writing. Why does

one sentence follow another? A logical flow of thought should be obvious to the reader (Secret #3 = One essay instead of many disconnected thoughts).

- Do not write the way you speak. Writing research papers and test essays are not informal endeavors. Formal writing does not necessarily mean that you use bigger words and more technical jargon. It does mean that you do not use slang, lazy speech tendencies, and poor grammar (Secret #4 = Write, do not just speak).

### How Can I Make My Writing Better?

Skill in writing is like anything else. The more you do it, the better you are at it. Interestingly, a way in which you can “write more” is by reading more. When you read well written books you learn how to write better. If you want to get better at basketball you need to practice basketball; you need to play. You can also improve your game by going to basketball games; you need to watch. It is the same way with writing; write and read other’s writing and you will get better and better.

The following writing tips may be helpful as you practice your writing:

- Do use a repeated process in which you write, read, edit. After writing a few sentences or a paragraph, stop writing and go back and read what you wrote. As you are reading what you wrote, stop reading and make necessary edits. Then begin writing again so that you can read again and edit again. Write, read, edit...write, read, edit...write, read, edit!
- Do not use contractions (use do not and do not use don’t).
- Do not begin sentences with conjunctions (“but”; “and”; “or”).
- Do not overuse commas.
- Do use shorter sentences more often (approximately 5-20 words). Use long sentences less frequently (more than 20 words).
- Do use paragraph divisions
- Do use transition sentences to lead off paragraphs
- Do develop good thesis statements (use the “5s” rule)
  - Succinct (one sentence)
  - Specific (not just a general statement...include some detail)
  - Structured (consistent with the order/flow of the paper)
  - Systematic (addressing all sections of the paper)

- Suggestive (rhetorical in expression; put forth as a position or a “stand” that is being taken)
  - George Washington was a great man (poor thesis statement)
  - George Washington was a great man in character especially exhibited in his integrity and leadership ability, and in deed as seen throughout his life in military achievements and political success (good thesis statement)
- Do use spell check
- Do structure the flow of your paper in light of and consistent with your thesis
- Do have (in general) 2-4 in-text citations per research paper page
- Do not write in 1<sup>st</sup> Person (for academic papers)
- Do not use the hypothetical “you” or “one” (“As you can see” or “As one can see”)
- Do not use the historical present (write in past tense when referring to the past)
- Do not be lazy with format (spacing, margins, font, justification, page #'s, etc...)
- Do not overuse quotes (quotes should mostly be used for credibility or literary impact)
- Do not use long quotes. If it is necessary to use a long quote (more than four lines) be sure to double indent both the left and right margin and single space the text)
- Do not leave quotes by themselves (intro the quote somehow or build it into the flow of a sentence)
- Do not leave orphan lines (a page cannot begin or end with one line of a paragraph)
- Do not use extra space between paragraphs (double space throughout the paper)
- Do write in complete sentences. Avoid run-on sentences (two independent clauses with no punctuation between), comma splices (two independent clauses with a comma between), and fragments (a piece of writing lacking a subject and/or a verb)
- Do avoid ending a sentence with a preposition
- Do be consistent in your use of person (do not switch from “he” to “we”)
- Do be consistent in your use of number (do not combine “we runs”)
- Do use active voice more than passive voice
- Do not underestimate the importance of transitions. Movement from one thought to another can be made clearer with the effective use of



transition words and phrases like “therefore” or “similarly” or “in the same way” or “on the contrary” or “on the other hand” or “thus” or “moreover.”

### What is a Process for Doing a Research Paper?

1. Decide on the Topic
2. Do the initial research (that is, collect resources)
3. Develop a general outline (to have a general idea of what you are looking for when you begin to look through your resources)
4. Survey/Read through resources with the use of note cards
  - a. Create a master card that has all necessary bibliography information for each resource used and a numbering system that links each resource to other note cards (so that if you end up using content from the note card in your paper and need to cite it you will have the bibliographic information for that source).
  - b. Each card should have a number (indexed to master card), page number (the page number(s) from the source that the information was taken from), topic title (for organization/categorization of cards), and the text/content you want to retain.
  - c. Organize cards according to topic titles (creating, in effect, an ordered and detailed outline of your paper with major sections and sub sections)
5. Begin to write paper
6. Edit/Clean up writing
7. Finalize all pieces (title page, works cited page, formatting)

### Other Tips for Doing a Research Paper

1. Initial research (collecting resources) should be done with fewer but longer blocks of time.
2. Ongoing research (note card collection) can be done with more and shorter blocks of time.
3. Write the paper in sections (it is often helpful to write the introduction and conclusion after writing the body)
4. Take advantage of spelling and grammar tools on most word processors (spell check, grammar check, thesaurus, etc.)
5. Compose on the computer (instead of writing out by hand on paper and then transferring to the computer) and constantly read over what you have written (write-read-edit; write- read-edit).
6. During final edit/clean up try to “tighten things up” where possible. Clumsy, bulky sentences can be reworded and shortened.
7. Pay attention to detail when dealing with the miscellaneous pieces of a paper (do not be lazy with the title page, works cited page, staple).
8. Research leads to more research (the “momentum” factor in research). Do not get discouraged. A goldmine of sources may be right around the corner. One good source may point you to ten good sources.
9. When you begin doing research be sure to have a significant block of time, so you do not lose the “momentum” of research.

## How Do I Do Research?

1. By Subject (e.g. John Wesley) Religion → Church Leaders → Revivals → Preachers  
History → European History → English History
2. By Keyword Wesley → Revival → Church → England → Methodist
  - How do you come up with different subjects/keywords?  
Get one relevant book (even an encyclopedia article) and look for information that points to the subject (words used to describe the subject; events associated with the subject; chapter titles; people associated with the subject; concepts associated with the subject, etc.).
3. By Author (remember, authors may have more than one book relating to the subject)
  - How do you find possible authors/titles?  
Get one book (even an encyclopedia article) and look at the bibliography)
4. By Type of Book (look for related books...research includes finding chapters/sections in books on your subject that have related titles)
  - How do you find your subject in related books?  
Look in the index and table of contents
5. By Reference Books (look up things in dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries, handbooks)
  - How do I find these reference books?  
Ask the librarian to show you sections of reference books in the library.
6. By Periodicals (look in indexes to find relevant topics)
  - How do I find these indexes?  
Ask the librarian to show you the location of the Periodical indexes in the library.
7. By Internet (remember, anything can get on the internet)

- An internet site or article must at least have an author to be considered credible.
- If your internet search yields too many sites, then try to narrow your search with more specific entries.
- Let internet articles point you to books (bibliographies, referrals, etc.)
- Be selective when scanning the results page of your search. Eliminate results based on information given in each summary (do not open every item).
- Do not waste time with sites that have no documentation (they cannot be cited in research papers).