

Lesson A. Choose Your Topic and Sources: Reading and Research

You have been given a list of topics from which to choose for your report. The first step in writing a report is to choose the topic you will be writing about.

<> **A-1. Read the sample reports provided in the boxes labeled A-1.**

<> **A-2. Start with the list of topics that are provided for you and think about these aspects of topic choosing:**

- (1) The topics* suggested for you to write about are purposely chosen for the length of paper you will have.
- (2) You will want to choose a topic from the list that is most interesting to you. You will be reading and researching about the topic, so you want to be sure you enjoy learning about it.
- (3) You want to choose a topic that you know you can find information about easily. For example, if you know you have an encyclopedia that has information about the soda/pop in it, you might want to write about the soda/pop.

<> **A-3. Write the topic(s) you have chosen on the topic line below.**

Topic: _____

Ext. - 2nd Topic: _____

<> **A-4. Choose one or two sources that contain information about your topic that will help you write your report.**

- (1) Now that you have chosen your topic, you will begin the reading and research process.
- (2) You will need one or two sources for your report, depending on your level and your teacher's wishes.
- (3) Follow the tips in the sidebar for locating a source or two that is at your reading and writing level.
- (4) You may choose any types of sources you desire.

⇔ **A-5. Read and mark your source(s) for possible aspects that you want to include in your report, following these Color-Coded Research tips:**

- (1) Photocopy the pages of your book that have to do with your topic or print off the pages of your online source that you think you will use.

Note: Copying a few pages of a book for a child's school report should not violate any copyright laws. If, however, your teacher or you feel that it does violate a law, plan to use sticky notes on the edges of your book rather than copying its pages.

- (2) Skim through the text of your source to get an idea of the various aspects of your topic(s). As you skim through your source(s), consider that you are writing one or two short paragraphs about your concessions--and your book or source contains many paragraphs! You will need to decide which parts of your topic you want in your report (since you cannot include all of the information from your source in just a short report).
- (3) Now that you have skimmed your source, while considering the **exact assignment** topic, start marking or highlighting your source for possible paragraph topics following these tips:
- Start out with one color of highlighter and highlight the information that has to do with your first (or only) concession's **basic characteristics** (which you will include in your paragraph).
 - Extension**--Using a second color of highlighter, highlight all of the information about the basic characteristics of your second concession such as:
 - Continue doing this with different color highlighters, one color for each paragraph you are assigned:
 - Basic students** will mark the only concession with one color highlighter, since you will write a one paragraph body.
 - Extension** students will mark the first concession with one color highlighter and the second concession with one other color of highlighter since you will write two paragraphs for your report.

Choosing User Friendly Sources

Specifically, you might like a source book that contains any or all of the following:

- Sidebars with further explanations of the material.
- Section headings that indicate what the next section is about.
- Pictures, graphs, and drawings that help to explain difficult information.
- Short chapters, but more chapters, that begin with each aspect of your topic.
- Vocabulary words or other challenging/technical terms in bold font or italics and defined somewhere--either directly in the text, in a sidebar, or in a glossary (list of terms and their definitions located in the back of the book).
- Detailed Table of Contents that not only lists the chapter titles but also the section headings, if possible.
- Index in the back of the book that tells you specifically on what page each minor topic can be found.
- Summaries at the ends of the chapters that briefly tell you what the chapter's contain.

Lesson B. Study Skills/Research: Create Outline for Informative Report

<> **B-1. Create an outline (notes) that you can write your report from using the source(s) that you have chosen and marked, following these steps:**

- (1) By now you should have chosen the concession(s) that you wish to write about, so it should be fairly easy to plug the information that you have highlighted onto the outlining cards you will create.
- (2) **Start with the first card given in this lesson, cut it out, and fill it in with information about your concession(s), using your source(s).**
- (3) **Extension** students may get information for your cards from both of your sources (two concessions).
- (4) **Extension** students will move to the second card, cut it out, and write notes about your second concession:
 - a. Write the topic of that paragraph on the topic of paragraph line (the second aspect you have chosen).
 - b. Open your source and find the information you highlighted or marked with sticky notes for that topic.
 - c. Fill in the sentence lines with the information from your source(s) until you have enough information on your card for an entire paragraph of the number of sentences assigned.
- (5) Keep these tips in mind:
 - a. **A paragraph is a unit of thought.**
 - i. Each card should only contain information about one concession.
 - ii. Do not put information about your other concession on the same paragraph card.
 - iii. **Each concession will have a separate paragraph.**

(Note: If you would like to write more than the assigned paragraphs, and your teacher agrees, you may create some additional note taking cards and do extra paragraphs.)
 - b. Just write down key words for each note card, but be sure to include any details that are hard to spell or difficult to remember.

CARD ONE: FIRST PARAGRAPH (PoB-A)

Topic of Paragraph: _____

Sentence 1 _____

Sentence 2 _____

Sentence 3 _____

Sentence 4 _____

Sentence 5 _____

Sentence 6 _____

Sentence 7 _____

Sentence 8 _____

Extension--CARD TWO: SECOND PARAGRAPH (PoB-B)

Topic of Paragraph: _____

Sentence 1 _____

Sentence 2 _____

Sentence 3 _____

Sentence 4 _____

Sentence 5 _____

Sentence 6 _____

Sentence 7 _____

Sentence 8 _____

Student One Paragraph Sample Essay

Cotton candy is many people's favorite concession at the circus. Cotton candy is made from sugar and air. Chefs used to melt sugar in a pan to create cotton candy. John C. Wharton and William J. Morrison invented the first cotton candy maker. They showed off their machine at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. The cotton candy maker turned this sugary treat into a cheap and delicious concession. **[PoB-A: Cotton Candy]**

(A-1 Sample)

Student Two Paragraph Sample Essay

Popcorn and peanuts are two of many people's favorite concessions at the circus. Popcorn is one of the most popular American concessions. South American tribes grew the first popcorn. Popcorn arrived in New England in the early 1800s. Americans loved watching the popcorn pop. They also loved the taste of this treat. Then, in 1885, Charles Cretor invented the mobile, steam-powered popper. This turned popcorn into one of Americans' favorite concessions at the fair and the circus. **[PoB-A: Popcorn]**

The peanut is the concession most closely connected to the circus. The peanut grows naturally in South America. In the 1800s, people began to grow peanuts in the southern U.S. Civil War soldiers on both sides found peanuts delicious and filling. Union soldiers brought peanuts north after the Civil War. Then, in the late 1800s, P.T. Barnum decided to sell peanuts at his circus. People loved the taste of roasted peanuts. The peanut was now a beloved concession. **[PoB-B: Peanuts]**

(A-1 Two Paragraph Sample)

Lesson C. Composition: Write Rough Draft of Informative Report About Favorite Concession at the Circus

Sample Thesis Statement

Cotton candy is many people's favorite concession at the circus

⇔ C-1. Follow these steps to write your report about a favorite concession at the circus:

- (1) **Read the topic of entire report** line to remind yourself of what your report is about.
- (2) **Read the topic of your first paragraph** and **the sentence notes** beneath it.
- (3) **Add any notes to this paragraph that you desire**--or mark through things you do not want or renumber the sentence lines if you want your information in a different order.
- (4) **Write the first paragraph of the body** of your report in your notebook or key it on the computer.
- (5) Be sure to **double space** (if keying) or **write on every other line** if writing by hand.
- (6) **Extension--Continue the steps above** for the rest of your report.

<> C-2. Add a Thesis Statement as needed.

- (1) Since you are not assigned an Opening Paragraph later, add a sentence in the first paragraph of your body that tells your readers what your entire report is about. (See examples below.) **This is called a Thesis Statement because it states the thesis (topic) of your paper.**
- (2) A Thesis Statement may be one sentence length or a couple of sentences in length.
- (3) If you already have a Thesis Statement, do not add another one.
- (4) You may just add a Thesis Statement in general about your concession, or you may use your quote as your Thesis Statement. Both examples are given below.

Lesson D. Composition and Editing: Edit and Revise Using the Checklist Challenge

<> D. Use the Checklist Challenge located after this week's lesson to edit your report.

- (1) Complete **each revision for each paragraph, as indicated.**
- (2) Insert revisions with pen or pencil into your rough draft paper.
- (3) **Highlight (or code) each revision on your rough draft paper** as directed by your teacher.
- (4) **Check off (or code) each item's check box** on the Checklist Challenge for this.

Note: If you are not familiar with the Checklist Challenge, and you feel that you need more help on it than this book provides, you may desire to secure a Write for a Month--Tools and Tricks book. Also, see the Checklist Challenge Coding box provided.

Lesson E. Composition: Final Copy Original Informative Report

- <> E-1. Write the final copy of your report in your notebook (on every line). If you prefer, you may key it on the computer (double spaced).**

- <> E-2. Read your final copy aloud. Do you like the way it sounds now? Do you notice an improvement in your report since you completed the Checklist Challenge?**