

VBCI REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION OF PAPERS

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Book Reports, Essays, and Research Papers - What's the Difference?

It is important that you understand your assignment before you begin. If the assignment is not clear, then ask your instructor to clarify. You will find it difficult to begin if expectations are not clear. Here are some guidelines to help:

The Summary Style Book Report

A summary style book report starts by summarizing each chapter concisely. A good way to do this is to divide the length required by the teacher (for example, 2500 words), and divide that by the number of chapters in the book (say, for example, 15), and devote that many words to summarize each chapter. In our example, you would have about 175 words to summarize each chapter.

An excellent summary style book report is more than just a summary of what you have read. It will of course summarize the book, but it should also include a few other components:

- **Title page:** Include essential information - title of project, textbook and author's name, instructor's name, course name, your full name and date.
- **Body:** This is the bulk of the report. Summarize each chapter clearly and concisely. Avoid the over use of direct quotes. Instead, review the main principles in your own words. You may choose to summarize each chapter in the book as you read it, if you find it difficult to remember an entire book when you want to start writing. Also you may include points or questions in which you disagree with the author - but remember the purpose of a book report is to summarize the author's material.
- **Personal Application:** Write 3-5 paragraphs to share how this book impacted you. How did this book affect you? Were you bored, inspired, enriched, challenged, or puzzled? Has the book affected how you will think in the future?
- **Footnotes:** Include footnotes and references so that the reader can follow up on your work.
- **Conclusion:** Wrap up any loose ends. Let the reader know if you would recommend this book - why/why not.

The Essay

An essay is written to support your ideas or point of view on a subject. They contain many of the same components as a book report, but the emphasis is on your point of view. The author or text is used to support your perspective.

- **Title page:** Include essential information -title of project, instructor's name, course name, textbook and author's name, your full name and date.

- Introduction: The introduction generally includes a subject statement. A subject statement is one sentence that defines the paper's main intention or argument. It usually consists of a fact and a statement about the fact that is debatable. Avoid using statements like: "This paper will . . .", "I think . . .", "I hope to prove . . .", and "I will show . . .".
- **Body:** Again, this is the bulk of your report. Here is where you will explain your point of view. The body is where you will support your subject statement with fact, interpretation and argument. A well-developed outline is a valuable tool which will keep you focused on the theme of your essay. While it can be helpful to use personal stories of how you have experienced a situation in support of your idea, *an essay is not intended to be a biography*.
- **Personal Application:** If you have not used a personal story to support your ideas/opinions, consider including a paragraph or two at the end of your essay. Some instructors may request a Personal Application Essay. In this type of essay, the bulk of your essay would be more "life application" with your opinion or life lesson summed in one or two paragraphs at the end of the essay.
- **Footnotes:** Include footnotes and references so that the reader can follow up on your work.
- **Conclusion:** The conclusion should reiterate your introductory subject statement and bring together your ideas or opinions on the subject.

The Research Paper/Report

Research papers and reports generally require the writer to read and research a particular topic. You may be writing a paper about your research findings or you may be supporting a particular point of view. Either way, you will be required to research and quote from several different sources. It is essential to use proper footnotes in a research paper. This is not an opinion paper; it is factual and requires support of facts and information.

Do not include statements like: "I think . . .", "I feel . . ." or "I believe . . ."

- **Title Page:** Include essential information: title of project, instructor's name, course name, your name and date.
- **Introduction/Summary:** This is a mini report. Open with one or two paragraphs which very briefly summarize the outline of the report. Your conclusion would also be included in your summary paragraph. You will support your conclusion later.
- **Background:** Include a background if there is information the reader needs to know. You could also use this part of the paper to show your comprehension of the subject/problem.
- **Body:** This is the bulk of the paper. In a research paper the main components are methods, findings/results, and evaluation. Ask the questions: Who? When? Where? What? Why? And How? The last three questions will particularly help you in your evaluation (analysis).
- **Conclusion:** What knowledge has come out of the report? Repeat the main ideas presented in the report.
- **Recommendations:** If the report requires action, make your recommendations. State them clearly as they connect to the results of the report. Do not make the reader guess at what you mean.

- **Attachments:** Include footnotes and references so that the reader can follow up on your work. Footnotes are essential, as well as any graphs, raw data, references to professionals involved in the project etc.

Things to Keep in Mind as You Write

- Clear writing reflects clear thinking
- Think much, write little. Stay focused on the subject and don't introduce information that is not relevant.
- Don't expect the reader to fill in the blanks. Provide complete information. Include specific, concrete examples rather than general and abstract examples.
- The paper will practically write itself with a good outline. The outline will help you stay focused and show you areas where your writing is weak or requires more research.
- Be yourself. Write plainly, clearly and distinctly.
- Avoid conversational terms and phrases
- Use visual aids such as *italics*, **boldface**, underline and - bulleted lists.
- Maintain proper sentence structure, spelling, grammar and punctuation. The computer's spell check is an essential tool to use.
- **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.** This is an illegal offense. Do not copy paragraphs from your friend's homework, or borrow passages from books, articles or web sites ***without identifying and crediting the work***. By documenting your sources you are actually adding to your credibility. Submitting the same paper for a different course also constitutes plagiarism.
- You are expected to submit a double spaced 12pt font, typed report. Quotations should be indented and 1.5 spaced.
- Computers have a "Word Count" feature. Ensure your report is not too short or too long.
- Guard against the tendency to babble on and on, creating words to meet your word count criteria.
- Keep your reports on disk - especially if you are sharing a computer with someone else.
- Give yourself enough time to submit quality work. Consider how long it will take **you** to complete the assignment. Don't gauge yourself by how long it takes others.
- Don't expect a 100 % mark on a 60% effort.
- Help is available if you are stuck or struggling. If you don't ask for help, you won't receive it.

Where Do I Begin? How Do I Start?

Writing involves three stages: prewriting, writing and editing.

Prewriting

1. Think carefully about what you are going to write. What questions are you answering? How will you research? What is the most important part of my answer?

2. Open your notebook. Briefly answer the above questions. This should only take a minute or two, but it will give you a place to start.
3. Collect facts about your assignment. Write down only the facts which are directly related to your subject/topic. This will save time later, as you won't need to sort through what's important and what's clutter.
4. Write down your own ideas. Ask yourself: What else do I want to say?
5. Find the main idea of your paragraph/essay. Choose the most important point you're presenting and stick to it.
6. Organize your facts and ideas. Create and follow your outline. The major points should support your subject/introduction. Group related ideas together under the headings and arrange them in a logical order. You could try using index cards and shuffle the cards until you are satisfied that the ideas flow.

- EXAMPLE:
- Introduction
 - Subject statement
 - Major point
 - sub point
 - sub point
 - sub point
 - Major point
 - sub point
 - useful quotation
 - personal application
 - Conclusion

Writing

Here is where you turn your ideas into sentences.

1. Develop your introduction, subject, and background information (depending on whether you are writing an essay, research paper or book report).
2. Develop each supporting paragraph (major, then sub points).
3. Write clear and simple sentences to express your meaning.
4. Use a thesaurus to help you find words to express your meaning.

Editing

Check your essay for mistakes before the instructor does.

1. Check your spelling, grammar, verb tenses.
2. Ensure each sentence has a subject. Does each sentence make sense?
3. Have you included all of the components needed: Introduction, subject, supporting paragraphs, conclusion, bibliography, etc.?
4. Is my essay interesting?
5. Read your essay again. Have someone else read it.

Footnotes

Use footnotes not endnotes. Footnotes are at the foot of the page and endnotes are either at the end of the chapter or at the end of the book under chapter separations.

Each footnote or endnote is numbered as per quotations. This is purposely enlarged; normally it will show up at the foot of the page and in smaller print.

1. Reginald W. Bibby, ***Social trends – Canadian Style*** (Toronto: Stoddard Publishing Co. Ltd., 1995), p. 66
2. Ibid., p. 77

Ibid.

(Latin, short for `ibidem`, `the same place`) is the term used to provide an endnote or footnote citation or reference for a source that was cited in the preceding endnote or footnote

In books and articles with many references, a writer may mention several sources on the same page. To avoid the constant repetition of the name of the author and the title of the work quoted or cited, the writer saves space by using *ibid.*, a shortcut for saying 'in the same book listed above'.

Note you cannot use *Ibid.* if there is a different book listed in between the quotations from the same source.

As you are in a post secondary institution, your writing skills should reflect this level of education. Many of you will soon be working towards a Master's degree and this will require an even higher standard of research and writing skills. Consider this information and training as preparation for your advanced studies.

Victory Bible College International reserves the right to reject any paper submitted that does not sufficiently meet the requirements listed herein.

Please note that 60% is the minimum grade required for a passing mark at VBCI.