

Introduction to College Research

“The” College Research Paper

At the college level, a research paper is not an encyclopedia entry that merely reports facts about a topic. Rather, college-level research projects pose a problem, question, or issue to be investigated, and the college-level research paper presents your findings in a way that supports your position on the problem, question, or issue. You need to do more than describe, in other words you need to analyze the material you have collected and figure out what it means. With this essay, you bring your own researched insight to a problem or question you have formulated. You need to demonstrate not only what you know about the topic, but that you have thought critically about some specific aspect of it.

With the topic of the Unequal Distribution of Global Wealth, the temptation might be to write a paper that simply reports statistics or describes the problem. However, a college research paper will say something about these statistics and analyze the problem or present possible alternative solutions for the problem. The research question often asks if there is a cause/effect relationship, what impacts what, or if there is a relationship (what two or more things are related).

Here are some possible research questions narrowed to specific aspects of the topic:

- *What/Which:* What are the factors that contribute to Global Wealth Inequality? Which appears to be the most important?
- *Why:* Given the numerous attempts at addressing Global Wealth Inequality, why does it persist?
- *So what:* Why should we be concerned about Global Wealth Inequality?

Notice that these questions require a commitment on your part not only to show that you have researched the material but that you have thought about its significance as well. In other words, you will have to provide information (data, statistics, textual evidence, other findings) and establish the significance of it in relation to the issue you are researching.

Adapted from *What Is Writing?: An Introduction to Writing as an Act and Medium of Communication* (2015).



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