**English 101**
**Professor Braziller**

**Research Proposal Assignment: What Is Your Focus?**
This proposal will help you solidify your ideas for your
semester's research. Your proposal should be approximately
two double-spaced pages in MLA manuscript format. Your
proposal should include the following:

1. Your research question
2. A working title for your project
3. A summary of your project. Identify your topic and
   describe what you will be looking at in terms of the topic.
   Include some key terms and additional questions that
   will guide your research.
4. A description of your purpose for working on this project.
   Why did you choose this topic? What do you hope to learn
   from this project?
5. A discussion of the key challenges you will face or
   you imagine you will face. What concerns do you have
   regarding the research/project?

Following is Jasmine's research proposal, in response to the above assignment.

▶ ASSIGNMENT

**Research Proposal.**
Jasmine has explored
her topic and
gathered facts and
opinions from some
solid sources, and she
is now ready to share
her ideas for what
she plans to do next.

**English 101**
**Professor Braziller**

**Research Proposal Assignment: What Is Your Focus?**
Jasmine Huerta
English 101
October 6, 2017

**Research Proposal**
1. Your research question
   How can diet—specifically, monitoring the intake of
   sugar, calories, and sodium—help someone with diabetes
   manage the disease and avoid taking insulin?

2. A working title for your project

   The working title for my project is "Living with Diabetes:
   Diet Is the Answer."

3. A summary of your project. Identify your topic and
   describe what you will be looking at in terms of the topic.
   Include some key terms and additional questions that
   will guide your research.

I plan to research and write about different ways you can control diabetes through nutritional choices. While there are medications used to control the disease, such as insulin, I'm more curious about natural approaches, such as diet. I want my readers to understand that diabetes doesn't have to be a death sentence and that even if you are predisposed to it, there are some simple things you can do to keep it from taking over your life or causing other health issues.

I also think, based on my research, that diet and nutrition might be just as powerful as insulin for some people. I wonder if doctors are too quick to prescribe insulin.

Much of the debate around diabetes has to do with the connection between diabetes and obesity. I wonder to what extent diabetes can be prevented by a healthy diet, one that helps people avoid obesity. Also, are there specific foods that children need to avoid? Are these different from what older people should avoid?

Besides researching different diabetes-related diets, I want to find out how people learn about these diets. Are there specific programs, initiatives, or educational tools used to get this information out to the public? How might schools and doctors share this information?

Following are some **key terms** I've discovered during my preliminary research: *glycemic index, metabolism, blood sugar, hypertension, obesity, glucose monitoring, and insulin.*

Following are some of the **questions that will guide my research:**

- What diets are best for diabetics?
- What foods do diabetics need to avoid?
- Can diet cure diabetes? If so, how?
- Can diet prevent someone from getting diabetes, even if he or she has a family history of the disease? If so, how?
- Can diet prevent someone's diabetes from getting worse? If so, how?
- Can dietary changes prevent or reduce a diabetic's dependence on insulin?

4. A description of your purpose for working on this project. Why did you choose this topic? What do you hope to learn from this project?

Diabetes runs in my family, so it's something that is very close to me. My cousin, who is only six years old, has

*(Continues on next page)*

type 1 diabetes. Just last month, my grandfather, who is somewhat overweight, but definitely not obese, was diagnosed with diabetes. When my mother was pregnant with me, she had gestational diabetes.

I believe I may be predisposed toward the disease, and I want to find out what I can do to avoid it. I also want to help my family by sharing what I learn—especially in terms of natural alternatives rather than traditional medicine.

5. **A discussion of the key challenges you will face or you imagine you will face. What concerns do you have regarding the research/project?**

My biggest challenge so far has been making sense of some terms I've encountered in my research. Some articles go into a lot of detail about the relationship of the glycemic index to insulin levels. Authors of these pieces also use technical terms such as pancreatic *islet cells*, *resistant starches*, and *macronutrients*.

Another challenge I might face is that my topic may be too narrow. Based on my research so far, it seems that many sources say yes, diet does contribute to diabetes prevention and management. But how might I expand on that? Will I end up just listing foods to eat and not to eat?

I think that trying to figure out if nutritional changes can actually replace insulin as treatment gives my project a good argumentative angle, but I am a little worried that I may end up arguing more strongly against insulin than I really want to.

I am also afraid of getting sidetracked and focusing too much on the obesity problem, especially in regard to children, and losing my focus on diabetes. While obesity is related, I really want to focus on preventing and managing the disease—and not so much on the causes of diabetes. While it's important to understand some of the causes, especially as they relate to nutrition, I'm more interested in prevention and treatment.

Now that Jasmine has written her proposal and submitted it to her instructor, she is ready to begin the next stage of her research.

## CHECKLIST | Creating a Research Proposal

What does a good research proposal do?

☐ **It assists you in organizing your project,** and includes five major components:

　☐ Research question (the main thrust of your research)

　☐ Working title

　☐ Summary of the project (a sketch of the research you've done, the questions you've raised, and the possible direction you will take, including the potential argument you may make)

　☐ Overall purpose (why you want to pursue this topic and project)

　☐ Potential challenges

☐ **It shows that you have a clear focus for your research.** Your research question and working title are specific, showing your reader the angle you are researching. Throughout the proposal, you include details rather than vague generalities. For example, Jasmine doesn't just write, "I want to learn how people find out about these diets." She adds these details: "Are there specific programs, initiatives, or educational tools. . . ."

☐ **It illustrates that you have done some preliminary research.** Your summary includes key terms that you discovered while doing research. While Jasmine might have previously thought of the key terms *obesity* and *insulin,* she probably had not considered such terms as *glycemic index* and *glucose monitoring.*

☐ **It gives reasons why you have selected your area of research.** By communicating why you chose your topic, your reader understands your choice, and you see why this research matters to you. By articulating these reasons, you stay more engaged.

☐ **It shows that you have considered potential challenges.** Anticipating challenges prepares you for the bumps you might hit during research. Additionally, a good research proposal tells your reader about those challenges so that you might be given assistance. For example, when Jasmine writes that she has encountered technical terms such as *pancreatic islet cells,* her reader might point her to resources where she can get help deciphering these terms.

# Organizing Your Sources

## Guided Process | How to Create a Bibliography

**Jasmine Huerta** (STUDENT), *Diabetes Project: Bibliography*

We highly recommend that you create an annotated working bibliography. A working bibliography is simply a list of the sources you've gathered and plan to refer to. An annotated bibliography is a working bibliography (a list of your sources) that includes your own brief notes about each source. In your annotations, you summarize each source, capturing its essence in a few sentences. If the source is argumentative, you also note the main points of the writer's argument. In addition, note the potential reliability of the source: Is it from a reliable site, news organization, or publication? Was it created by a source you can trust? How well do the source and its author fit with your research? What might the source add? What might be its drawbacks? (For details on evaluating sources, see Chapter 12.)

Here is how Jasmine describes her process:

> I began each entry with a basic summary. In my summaries, I note specific examples, such as unfamiliar terms or important evidence. I've also indicated my evaluation of how dependable each source is. When I quoted exact language from a source, I used quotation marks. I also made connections among my sources.

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### Annotated Working Bibliography/Works Cited

Brand-Miller, Jennie, et al. "Low–Glycemic Index Diets in the Management of Diabetes." *Diabetes Care*, vol. 26, no. 8, 2003, pp. 2261–67, care.diabetesjournals.org/content/26/8/2261.long.

The authors explore the controversy about whether a low-glycemic diet actually helps someone manage his or her diabetes. The article presents the research methods used, along with the results. Ultimately, the results of their study show that a low-glycemic diet did help patients manage their diabetes—in contrast to patients whose diets consisted of high-glycemic foods. The article is filled with unfamiliar terms such as "acarbose therapy." At the end is a list of footnotes and references that will be useful as I continue my research. This is a very reliable source because *Diabetes Care* is a peer-reviewed journal; also, the use of documentation reinforces the authors' ethos.

"Glycemic Index and Diabetes." *American Diabetes Association*, www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/planning-meals/glycemic-index-and-diabetes.html. Accessed 26 Sept. 2017.

The ADA's page on the glycemic index and its relationship to diabetes is an informative summary on the topic. It has three subheads, so readers can immediately find information: "What is the glycemic index?" "What affects the GI of a food?" And, "Is the GI a better tool than carbohydrate counting?" The article discusses how the glycemic index is affected by many things and is not simply determined by a food's type. For example, factors such as length of ripening and cooking time affect a food's glycemic index. The article is written for a general reader, so I found that I could understand all its terms and get a beginning grasp of the glycemic index. This article, too, is very reliable since the American Diabetes Association is a respected and noted organization related to the field.

Risérus, Ulf, Walter C. Willett, and Frank B. Hu. "Dietary Fats and Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes." *Progress in Lipid Research*, vol. 48, issue 1, 2009, pp. 44–51.

This article summarizes the research on the connection between dietary fat and diabetes and then discusses the results of a study of how dietary fats affect insulin resistance. That study found that replacing foods high in saturated fats with foods that do not have hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fats has a positive effect on diabetes. The article contains a lot of medical jargon and technical terms, but because I am already somewhat familiar with diabetes and the concept of glucose metabolism, I was able to understand most of it. I believe this is the most reliable source I have found so far because it appears in a peer-reviewed scientific journal and the authors have received prestigious grants for their research.

"Simple Steps to Preventing Diabetes." *The Nutrition Source*, Harvard School of Public Health, www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/diabetes-prevention/preventing-diabetes-full-story/index.html. Accessed 26 Sept. 2017.

This article focuses on ways to prevent type 2 diabetes. It gives statistics on the number of people affected by the disease and lists illnesses that the disease may cause, such as blindness. Prevention strategies are offered, such as diet and exercise. The writers sum up these strategies by saying, "Stay lean and stay active." This article, like the Brand-Miller piece, also includes a list of references, so I will add that to my potential project sources. Since this piece was published by a Harvard University site, I trust the information presented.

# CHECKLIST | Beginning Your Research

As you begin drawing on sources, forming your research questions, drafting your research proposal, and creating a bibliography, ask yourself the following questions.

## RHETORICAL SITUATION & CHOICES

☐ **Purpose.** What am I learning as I research? And how can I develop what I'm learning into a solid research question? Does it simply focus on facts (if so, it's not refined enough)? Or is it geared toward analysis and argument (if so, I'm heading in the right direction)?

☐ **Audience.** What expectations will my readers (my instructor, classmates, and any audience beyond) have regarding the quality of my sources? (See Chapter 12 for more on evaluating source quality.) As I gather sources into an annotated bibliography, how can I make certain that my notes on each source show readers its potential usefulness?

☐ **Rhetorical appeals.** How will I know whether to trust an author and source? What about a given author and source gives me confidence, or doubts? What techniques and appeals do authors use that I can adopt for my own purposes? To what degree do they use logos (logic) and pathos (emotion) to reach readers?

☐ **Modes & media.** How do modes and media come into play as I'm reading and choosing sources? Do my sources represent a range of modes and media?

## GENRE CONVENTIONS

☐ **Elements of the genre.** Does the author of this source draw on other sources? Does the author document the work of others?

☐ **Style.** When I look at a potential source, how much attention should I pay to the author's style? Are informal first-person pieces the right fit for my topic? Do I need to gather sources written in a variety of styles? To what extent do tone and level of detail contribute to a source's reliability?

☐ **Design.** When I look at a potential source, how important are design considerations?

☐ **Sources.** What documentation style will I use (MLA, APA, Chicago, other)?

# Organizing Your Sources

Want to experiment? Draft a research proposal. Create an annotated working bibliography.

Find a topic that interests you and work through the points in the Refining Your Research Question checklist until you develop a workable research question. Then do the following:

1. Draft a research proposal for your professor that includes:
   - A working title for your project (you can always change the title later, when you have a better idea of what your finished project will actually cover).
   - A summary of the project, including which aspects of the topic you will research.
   - A list of the keywords you've identified in the research you've done so far.
   - A discussion of your purpose in working on the project. This is where you'll discuss why you are interested in answering the research question.
   - A discussion of the challenges you anticipate facing in your project and strategies you can use to deal with them.
2. Keep an annotated working bibliography of all the sources you use, even ones you think you won't refer to in your final written report. You never know.
3. Annotate three sources you find particularly interesting or thought-provoking. In your annotation, discuss:
   - What the summary is about
   - The argument the source makes
   - How reliable you judge this source to be and why
   - How this source might be used in your project