

HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER





"Knowledge is of two kinds.
We know a subject ourselves,
or we know where we can
find information upon it."

-Dr. Samuel Johnson
(1709-1784)

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SELECTING A TOPIC

Try to select a topic in which you are interested. It is important to make sure that your topic is not so general that it would be impossible to cover the subject area adequately without writing an entire book. You also do not want the topic to be so specific that there may not be enough information available for you to find.

Mind mapping is one way to help guide you to an appropriate topic. Do this by starting with a main topic, and then making branches off of it to see what types of possibilities it offers. In many cases, it may also be helpful to go the library with an idea in mind, find out what is available, and then adjust the topic if necessary.

SOURCES FOR INFORMATION

- **District Library Catalog**

The District Library Catalog allows you to search for books in the junior high school library and in the other libraries in the district. You use the Change Collection tab located at the bottom of the screen to switch between the collections. If you want to check out a book from one of the other libraries, ask the librarian to help you with this process. The book will arrive with a tag on the cover indicating that it is an inter-library loan. When you are done with the borrowed book, return it to the circulation desk just as you would a book from the D.J.H.S. library.

There are several ways to search for a book. You can use the traditional author, title, or subject searches, but you can also do keyword or advanced searches to help you locate information on your topic.

A keyword search brings up any record in the catalog that has what you typed in if it is located anywhere in the record. An advanced search allows you to combine search terms using Boolean Operators (and, or, not.)

Boolean Searching

| | |
|-----|--|
| and | both word(s)/terms must appear |
| or | either word(s)/terms may appear |
| not | the first word/term must appear, the second word/term must not |

- **Reference Section**

There are many sources in the reference section that contain information on many subjects. These include encyclopedias which are both general (i.e. World Book) and topical (i.e. Flags of the World), dictionaries, atlases, almanacs, and other subject specific resources.

- **Electronic Resources/The Internet**

All network computers in the library have Internet access. A good starting point is the library web page, located at <http://www.dewitt.edzone.net/~djhslib>. From this page you can get to search engines, subject links, and other online resources. The REMC13 page provides many great online databases, all of which are linked on this page. If you do not already know the user name and password, contact your librarian for this information. The databases include SIRS Discoverer, Electric Library, and ProQuest, a magazine database. In addition, the OCLC FirstSearch link will be found on the library page. Many of these sites have full text documents available online. It is important when using an Internet site that you verify the validity, reliability, and authenticity of that site.

- **Magazines and Newspapers**

Magazines and newspapers are good resources for current information. There are some copies of magazines in the library, and there are also online indexes available from the library's web page. Infotrac, which is listed under the REMC13 websites, has 120 full text newspapers to choose from. The newspapers are from around the country and the world. The Proquest database, General Reference Center Gold and the Kids Edition database all contain magazine articles.

- **Non-print Materials**

The library has other items such as filmstrip sets, videos, transparencies, and other non-print sources, which are available to you. These are all searchable on the district library catalog. Look for the call number section indicators VC for videocassette, FS for filmstrip, KIT for filmstrip kit, or SL for slides.

COLLECTING INFORMATION

- **Bibliography Cards**

It is important to keep track of the sources that you use to collect information. One way to do this is by using note cards. You could also write down all of your sources (books, magazines, pamphlets, etc.) on a sheet of paper.

It is also important to remember to write down all of the information for your bibliography. Below are examples of what should be included (some sources may not have all of these). For further information, look at the Sample Citations section, which begins on page 10, or Appendix A, to see what information you need for your sources. Be sure to number your sources as you find them, so that when you are taking notes you put the appropriate source number with the information you are quoting or paraphrasing.

For books:

- author(s) or editor(s) full name
- full title including any subtitle
- edition if the book is a second or later edition
- number of the volume and total volumes if the book is in a multivolume work
- place (city) of publication
- shortened version of publisher's name
- year of publication

For magazines:

- author(s),
- title, magazine title
- magazine date (for regular magazines)
- volume (for scholarly journals)
- page numbers

For online magazines:

- author(s)
- title of article
- magazine title
- magazine date

- volume
- page numbers
- name of online resource
- date of online resource
- date viewed
- URL of online resource

For general encyclopedia:

- author(s) (of the article, not of the entire set)
- title of the article
- title of the encyclopedia, edition
- year of publication
- page numbers

For special encyclopedia:

- author(s) (of the article, not the entire set)
- title of article
- title of the encyclopedia
- editors
- number of volumes
- place of publication
- publisher
- copyright date

For websites:

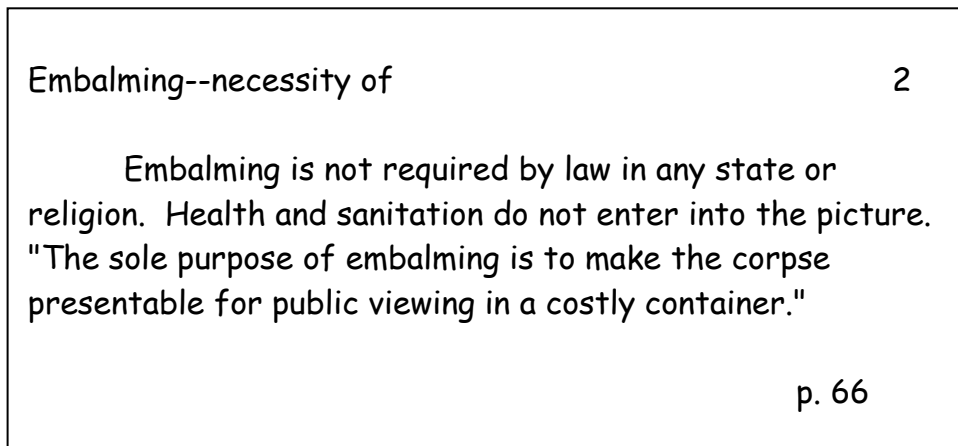
- author(s)
- title of page
- title of main website
- title of web page
- web address
- date of update or visit

For online databases:

- information as with websites noted above and any information related to the article you are using

- **Taking Notes**

Once you have located your sources, it is time to begin taking notes. It is crucial to be accurate when you write down information. There are different methods for taking notes. One is to use note cards. At the top left corner of the note card list the main idea of the information. In the top right corner include the bibliography card number (the source number). Then include the information about the main idea. Be sure to use quotation marks if you copy it directly from the source. The page number of the source should be included in the bottom right corner. You could use a similar method using notepaper -- just be sure to include source number and page number so that you will be able to document your information.



Sample Note Card

ORGANIZING YOUR PAPER

- **The Working Outline**

This is what you create as you do your research. Organize your note cards in their most logical order to set it up. It should include major points only. You should not begin a new subdivision if there are not more than two points to be listed. See Appendix B for an example.

- **The Final Sentence Outline**

When your research has been completed, you should redo your working outline using complete sentences. It should include both major points and supporting details.

DOCUMENTATION

If you copy information directly from a source you must give credit to that source. Additionally, if you give an analysis and/or opinion from one of your sources that you paraphrase (put into your own words, but the main idea that you are presenting doesn't change from the author's original idea), this also requires that you give credit. To do this, put the information in quotations followed by a parenthetical citation. The format for doing parenthetical quotations is explained in the remainder of this section.

The following examples are used for all types of sources. The author is used, and if there is no author, then a shortened version of the title is used (enough so that it is clear which title is being cited). If there are two or more books by the same author, you need to include enough of the title to make it clear which one you are citing. Following the author's last name, or title if it is used, include the page number on which the information was found.

This method is from the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, fifth edition, 1999. There is a copy of this book available in the library media center if you are unable to find an example in this booklet. Remember that there are also other methods available for doing a research paper, and you should always use the method your teacher asks you to use.

Examples

One Author

If the source you are using has one author, you should cite your source in this manner:

Dr. James is described as a "not-too-skeletal Ichabod Crane" (Simon 68).

This tells the person reading your paper that on your Works Cited page you have a source listed with an author whose last name is Simon, and the information you have just included can be found on page 68.

If you use the author's name directly in your paper, it is only necessary to give the page number in parentheses:

Simon describes Dr. James as a "not-too-skeletal Ichabod Crane" (68).

This also tells the person reading your paper that on your Works Cited page you have a source listed with an author whose last name is Simon, and the information you have just included can be found on page 68.

More Than One Author

If your source has more than one author, use the following examples, depending on how it was listed on your Works Cited page (*et al* means *and the others*):

Dyal, Corning, and Willows identify several types of students, including "Authority-Rebel" (4).

If *et al* is used in the Works Cited:

Authority-Rebel "tends to see himself as superior to other students in the class" (Dyal et al 4).

Two Works by the Same Author

If you have two different sources listed on your Works Cited page, and the author is the same for both, you must also include a portion of the title so that it is apparent from which source you are getting the information:

When old paint becomes transparent, it sometimes shows the artist's original plans: "a tree will show through a woman's dress" (Hellman, Pentimento 1).

This tells the person reading your paper that there are two sources on your Works Cited page in which Hellman is the author, and this information came from the one with the title beginning with Pentimento.

No Author

If the source you are using does not have an author, then you use enough of the title so that it is clear which citation the information refers to:

Lillian Hellman calls Dashiell Hammett "my closest, my most beloved friend" ("Woman" 224).

WRITING THE REPORT

The writing of the actual report is done in several steps, which include a first rough draft, possibly a second rough draft, and at times even a third draft or more. From this you then make your final copy. With the use of a computer it is easy to work and rework your paper until it is just how you want it. The following should be included in your report:

- **Introduction**

This should briefly and clearly state the purpose of your research paper (thesis statement).

- **Body**

In your words, create the main part of your paper with the use of your final outline. Use the information on your note cards as supporting information. Use complete sentences, and do not use abbreviations, slang, or fragments. Main headings should be centered at the top of each section of text, with a double-space between the heading and the corresponding text. Do not use flowery language that distracts from your subject.

- **Conclusion**

This final paragraph or section should tie everything together and connect all of the important points to draw a final conclusion about what has been written.

PREPARING YOUR FINAL COPY

The following shows one way to complete a report. Remember you should always put your paper together according to the directions given to you by your teacher.

- **The Title Page**

Arrange it as follows:

- title of the paper -- center one-third of the way down from the top of the page (see Appendix C for a sample title page)
 - your name
 - teacher's name
 - class
 - date submitted
 - an illustration -- optional
- center these four items single-spaced two-thirds of the way down from the top of the page

- **The Table of Contents**

This is placed at the beginning of your paper, and lists the main topics and the page numbers they can be found on. It can also list tables or illustrations in your paper. Use the following guidelines (see the Table of Contents for this research guide as an example):

- Use the heading *Contents or Table of Contents* centered on the twelfth line from the top of the page (2 inches)
- Triple-space between the heading and the first entry
- The page numbers should line up on the right side of the Table of Contents, preceded by a line of dots from the title of the section
- Give only the first page number of the section

- **The Report**

When the above information has been collected, it is time to make the final copy. Do this using the following instructions:

- If you type it, or use a word processor, leave a margin of 1-1/2 inches on the left side of your text (to allow for punched holes or a binder).
- The top, bottom, and right sides should have 1-inch margins.
- The first page should have a 2-inch top margin.
- The paper should be double-spaced, except where noted in the Works Cited or Bibliography at the end of the paper (see the next section for these guidelines).
- Include graphs, diagrams, charts, etc. when possible to support your work. Refer directly to them using parentheses, for example: *The results of the heat experiment (figure 2) parallel those of the previous studies.* Figures are labeled at the bottom, tables at the top. Both should be lined up from the left margin of the figure or table. Be sure to label them appropriately. See Appendix D for an example.

- **Page Numbers**

Number your pages in the upper right-hand corner 1/2 inch from the top of the page and 3 to 4 spaces to the right of the text. Do not type a number on page 1. Number the Works Cited page as if it were a continuation of the text.

- **Works Cited (Bibliography)**

In-text citations (quotes or paraphrases) should be used in writing a paper (this is explained on page 5 under Documentation). Anything that was cited (quoted or paraphrased) should be listed on a sheet at the end of the paper with the heading *Works Cited* or *Bibliography* depending on what your teacher requires. Remember you need to do this if you are quoting directly or if you are paraphrasing or rewording what the author(s) wrote. The following rules apply:

- It should be alphabetical by the first word in the entry (author's last name, or title if there is no author. Do not alphabetize a title by *a*, *an*, *the* if they begin the title).
- Include complete bibliographic information in the order noted in the examples that follow.
- Each individual entry is single-spaced.
- Double-space between entries.
- Except for magazines, do not include page numbers.
- Underline the title of books and magazines.
- Titles of magazine and encyclopedia articles should be in quotation marks.
- Do not number entries.

SAMPLE CITATIONS

The following is a list of examples on how to do the citation (or bibliography entry) for different sources you may have used to write your paper. The headings (in italics and bold) describe the different types of sources from which the examples are made. If you do not find an appropriate example, check the MLA Handbook.

One author

Smith, Peter. The United States Today. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972.

Two or three authors

Hines, Donald K., and John Smith. The Opening of the Wilderness. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978.

Three or more authors

Blank, Henry, et al. Study Skills for the High School Student. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1985.

No author

Views from a Window. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1952.

Institution or association as the author

American Library Association. Directory of Media Specialists in the U.S. Chicago: ALA, 1985.

Editor

Coning, C. T., ed. Bringing America Home. New York: Freedom, 1983.

Separately titled volume

Chenney, Maxwell. Great Philosophies Vol. 3: Aristotle. Edited by George Jacobs. 10 vols. New York: Simon, 1975.

Radio or television program

"An Interview with Sadat." 60 Minutes. CBS, 11 Nov. 1979.

Author's work

Coleridge, Samuel. The Complete Works of Samuel Coleridge. Edited by W. G. T. Shedd, Vol. 1: Aids to Reflection. New York: Harper, 1884.

Magazine article with author

King, Jacquelyn. "Variations on a Coastal Theme," Southwest Art Aug. 1986: 62-67.

Magazine article with no author

"The Good Gray Suit." Consumer Reports Aug. 1986: 502-510.

Unpublished source

Whitehead, Joseph. "Use of the Database in Secondary Media Programs." Paper presented at the meeting of the Association of Educational and Communication Technology, Anaheim, California, January, 1985.

Newspaper article

"Miss America Is More Than Just a Pretty Face." USA Today, 12 Sept. 1986, sec. A: 11.

Pamphlet (do the same as a book)

Career as an Aerospace-Aircraft Engineer. Chicago: Inst. for Research, 1978.

Government publication

United States. Cong. Senate. Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments of the Committee of the Judiciary. Hearings on the "Equal Rights" Amendment. 91st Cong., 2nd sess. S. Res. 61. Washington: GPO, 1970.

Washburne, E. B. Memphis Riots and Massacres. U.S. 39th Cong., 2nd sess. H. Rept. 101. 1866. New York: Arno, 1969.

Personal interview

Lunden, Joan. CBS Studios, New York, New York. Interview 16 Apr. 1986.

Encyclopedia article with an author

Evans, J. D. "Aristotle." World Book Encyclopedia. 14th ed. 1983.

Encyclopedia article with no author

"Andorra." Compton's Encyclopedia. 1986.

Non-familiar reference work

Le Patourel, John. "Normans and Normandy." Dictionary of the Middle Ages. Ed. Joseph R. Strayer. 13 vols. New York: Scribner's, 1987.

Non-print media (slides, videos, filmstrips, etc.)

Building with Solar (Slide-sound). Creative Productions, 1982. 80 color slides with one cassette.

Computer or information service

Schomer, Howard. "South Africa: Beyond Fair Employment." Harvard Business Review May-June 1983: 145+. Dialog file 122, item 119425 833160.

Computer software

Soldan, Theodore J., and James D. Spain. Population Growth. Vers. 1.3. computer software. Conduit, 1984. Disk.

CD-ROM software

Collison, Robert L. "Library." The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia. Computer software. Grolier Educational, 1992. CD-ROM.

Electronic sources (Internet sites)

Britannic Online. Vers. 98.2. Apr. 1998. Encyclopaedia Britannica. 8 May 1998
<<http://www.eb.com>>.

The History Channel Online. 1998. History Channel. 19 June 1998
<<http://historychannel.com/>>.

Project Bartleby. Steven van Leewen. May 1998. Columbia U. 5 May 1998
<<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/>>.

Sí España. Ed. José Félix Barrio. Vers. 2.0. Oct. 1996. Embassy of Spain, Ottawa. 3 Feb. 1998 <<http://www.docwed.ca/SiSpain/>>.

Thomas: Legislative Information on the Internet. 26 May 1998. Lib. of Congress, Washington. 19 June 1998 <<http://thomas.loc.gov/>>.

"Catalán." Sí España. Ed. José Félix Barrio. Vers. 2.0. Oct. 1996. Embassy of Spain, Ottawa. 3 Feb. 1998 <<http://www.docwed.ca/SiSpain/spanish/language/language/catalan.html>>.

"City Profile: San Francisco." CNN Interactive. 19 June 1998. Cable News Network. 19 June 1998 <<http://www.cnn.com/TRAVEL/CITY.GUIDES/WTR/north.america/profiles/nap/sanfrancisco.html>>.

Dawe, James. Jane Austen Page. 15 Sept. 1998 <<http://nyquist.ee.ualberta.ca/~dawe/austen.html>>.

"Endangered Species Act Upheld." AP Online 22 June 1998. 22 June 1998
<<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/w/AP-Court-Endangered-Species.html>>.

"Table Tennis." Compton's Encyclopedia Online. Vers. 2.0 1997. America Online. 4 July 1998. Keyword: Compton's.

APPENDIX A - SAMPLE BIBLIOGRAPHY OR WORKS CITED PAGE

American Library Association. Directory of Media Specialists in the U.S. Chicago: ALA, 1985.

"Andorra." Compton's Encyclopedia. 1986.

Berlage, Gai. Inham. Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History. Westport: Greenwood, 1994.

Blank, Henry, et al. Study Skills for the High School Student. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1985.

Britannic Online. Vers. 98.2. Apr. 1998. Encyclopaedia Britannica. 8 May 1998 <<http://www.eb.com>>.

Building with Solar (Slide-sound). Creative Productions, 1982. 80 color slides with one cassette.

Career as an Aerospace-Aircraft Engineer. Chicago: Inst. for Research, 1978.

"Catalán." Sí España. Ed. José Félix Barrio. Vers. 2.0. Oct. 1996. Embassy of Spain, Ottawa. 3 Feb. 1998 <<http://www.docwed.ca/SiSpain/spanish/language/language/catalan.html>>.

Chenney, Maxwell. Great Philosophies Vol. 3: Aristotle. Edited by George Jacobs. 10 vols. New York: Simon, 1975.

"City Profile: San Francisco." CNN Interactive. 19 June 1998. Cable News Network. 19 June 1998 <<http://www.cnn.com/TRAVEL/CITY.GUIDES/WTR/north.america/profiles/nap/sanfrancisco.html>>.

Coleridge, Samuel. The Complete Works of Samuel Coleridge. Edited by W. G. T. Shedd, Vol. 1: Aids to Reflection. New York: Harper, 1884.

Collison, Robert L. "Library." The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia. Computer software. Grolier Educational, 1992. CD-ROM.

Coning, C. T., ed. Bringing America Home. New York: Freedom, 1983.

Dawe, James. Jane Austen Page. 15 Sept. 1998 <<http://nyquist.ee.ualberta.ca/~dawe/austen.html>>.

"Endangered Species Act Upheld." AP Online 22 June 1998. 22 June 1998 <<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/w/AP-Court-Endangered-Species.html>>.

Evans, J. D. "Aristotle." World Book Encyclopedia. 14th ed. 1983.

Feldman, Paula R., ed. British Women Poets of the Romantic Era. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1997.

"The Good Gray Suit." Consumer Reports Aug. 1986: 502-510.

Hines, Donald K., and John Smith. The Opening of the Wilderness. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978.

The History Channel Online. 1998. History Channel. 19 June 1998 <<http://historychannel.com/>>.

"Honduras." The Encyclopedia Americana. 1994 ed.

"An Interview with Sadat." 60 Minutes. CBS, 11 Nov. 1979.

King, Jacquelyn. "Variations on a Coastal Theme," Southwest Art Aug. 1986: 62-67.

Le Patourel, John. "Normans and Normandy." Dictionary of the Middle Ages. Ed. Joseph R. Strayer. 13 vols. New York: Scribner's, 1987.

Lunden, Joan. CBS Studios, New York, New York. Interview 16 Apr. 1986.

"Miss America Is More Than Just a Pretty Face." USA Today, 12 Sept. 1986, sec. A: 11.

Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik. A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman, 1985.

OR

Quirk, Randolph, et al. A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman, 1985.

Project Bartleby. Steven van Leewen. May 1998. Columbia U. 5 May 1998
<<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/>>.

Schomer, Howard. "South Africa: Beyond Fair Employment." Harvard Business Review May-June 1983: 145+. Dialog file 122, item 119425 833160.

Sí España. Ed. José Félix Barrio. Vers. 2.0. Oct. 1996. Embassy of Spain, Ottawa. 3 Feb. 1998 <<http://www.docwed.ca/SiSpain/>>.

Smith, Peter. The United States Today. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972.

Soldan, Theodore J., and James D. Spain. Population Growth. Vers. 1.3. computer software. Conduit, 1984. Disk.

"Table Tennis." Compton's Encyclopedia Online. Vers. 2.0 1997. America Online. 4 July 1998. Keyword: Compton's.

Thomas: Legislative Information on the Internet. 26 May 1998. Lib. of Congress, Washington. 19 June 1998 <<http://thomas.loc.gov/>>.

United States. Cong. Senate. Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments of the Committee of the Judiciary. Hearings on the "Equal Rights" Amendment. 91st Cong., 2nd sess. S. Res. 61. Washington: GPO, 1970.

Views from a Window. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1952.

Washburne, E. B. Memphis Riots and Massacres. U.S. 39th Cong., 2nd sess. H. Rept. 101. 1866. New York: Arno, 1969.

Whitehead, Joseph. "Use of the Database in Secondary Media Programs." Paper presented at the meeting of the Association of Educational and Communication Technology, Anaheim, California, January, 1985.

APPENDIX B - WORKING OUTLINE

- I. Main idea
 - A. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact
 - B. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact

- II. Main idea
 - A. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact
 - B. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact

- III. Main idea
 - A. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact
 - B. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact

- IV. Main idea
 - A. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact
 - B. Sub-topic
 - 1. Supporting fact
 - 2. Supporting fact

APPENDIX C - SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

**TITLE
OF THE
PAPER**

(An optional illustration could
be used here or elsewhere on
the title page)

Your name
Teacher's name
Class
Date submitted

APPENDIX D - SAMPLE FIGURE/GRAPH

Example of a figure

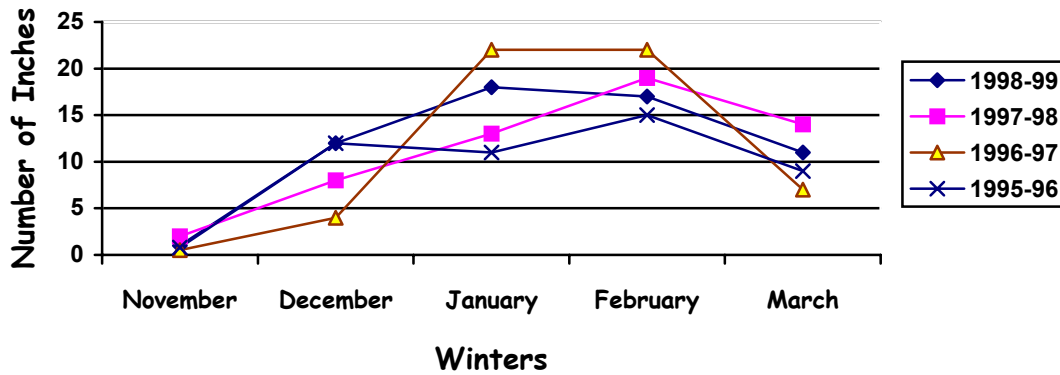


Figure 1. Monthly snowfall in Michigan over four winters.

Example of a table

Table 1. Number of Michigan students enrolled in vocational programs by area and enrolled in the 11th and 12th grades during 1999.

| Vocational Programs | Boys | Girls |
|--------------------------------------|------|-------|
| Vocational Agriculture | 918 | 216 |
| Health Occupations | 72 | 384 |
| Home Economics Occupations | 21 | 62 |
| Marketing and Distributive Education | 708 | 863 |
| Office Occupations | 2297 | 3764 |
| Trades & Industry | 1837 | 138 |

NOTES