

A Great Research Project Assignment Submission will:

- Include each main idea & use supporting material including relevant chapter key terms,
- Compare & contrast (critique) in a well-organized way,
- Give examples of key issues in group dynamics, conformity, obedience & group-think, and
- Apply structural-functional, conflict and/or symbolic interactionist theories, if applicable and relevant.

Step 1: The Selection of a Research Topic

Your choice of a topic or subject is crucial to your research assignment. Your topic must not be too general (such as "Gender Role"), but should have a special edge or angle that you can explore (such as "Gender Role in Dual-Care Families").

Tips for Choosing a Topic include:

1. Review the expectations of the assignment for focus, source, topic, and page limit requirements.
2. Look at the table of contents in your course textbooks.
3. Limit the time frame and the focus so that the topic can be addressed within the page limits set by the instructor.
4. After doing background research on the subject, write a Preliminary Research Hypothesis or question that includes the topic you chose.

Step 2: Understanding and Finding "Source" Material

Different sets of tools, such as databases or catalogs, find different sets of materials. For a thoroughly researched sociology paper and depending on the scope of the assignment, students generally need some or all of the different types of sources discussed below.

1. Sources required for all sociology papers:
 - Research or scholarly articles
 - Scholarly books
2. Sources that may be available or required involving the objects and/or concepts related to the topic:
 - Government documents
 - Quality publications
 - Relevant mass media
 - Expert analysis
 - Quantitative data

Step 3: Selecting a Mix of Primary and Secondary Sources

Source material is information you have gathered to support your research topic. Try to use recent sources. A book may look valuable, but if its copyright date is 1955 the content has probably been replaced by recent research and current developments.

Primary sources include novels, speeches, eyewitness accounts, interviews, letters, autobiographies, or the results of original research. Feel free to refer to a primary source because it has direct relevance to your discussion.

Secondary sources are writings about the primary source, someone's accomplishments or a specific event. Examples of a secondary source are reports on a presidential speech or a review of new scientific findings.

Examples of primary and secondary sources are:

Topic	Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
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SOC 101 – Introduction to Sociology
Faculty Lecturer: Baseemah Bashir, MA, MBTI, SPHR
Fall 2010 Course Syllabus

Political Science	Speeches, writings by presidents and/or other public figures, the <i>Congressional Record</i> , documents written by historical figures.	Newspaper reports, news magazines, political journals and newsletters, reports of agencies and departments, journal articles, history books.
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Tips for selecting primary and secondary sources include:

1. *Read key parts of an article first.* Read the entire article only if a quick survey encourages you to investigate further. Key parts of an article include:
 - The title.
 - An abstract.
 - The opening paragraphs.
 - Each topic sentence of paragraphs of the body of the article.
 - The closing paragraphs.
 - Author credits.
2. *Read key parts of a book.* A book requires you to survey:
 - The table of contents.
 - The book jacket, if one is available.
 - The foreword, preface, or introduction.
 - The conclusion
 - The index.
3. *Read key parts of internet articles.* Key parts of an Internet article include:
 - The home page.
 - The hypertext links to other sites. Their quality can be determined by the domain tag edu, org, or gov. Be wary of sites that have the tag com or net.

Step 4: Responding to the Sources

Once you have successfully selected the primary and secondary sources, you can begin developing the content for your paper.

Tips for selecting content include:

1. *Select key ideas.* In many instances you may wish to borrow only one idea from a source, which you can rephrase in your own words. For example, from a bulletin on air- bag safety, a student selected just one paragraph, on "smart" air-bag technology, to use in her paper as a one-sentence summary with an appropriate citation to the entire article (Note the page number from which the material was taken).
2. *Outline key ideas.* You can frame your own outline to capture an author's primary themes; a quick outline of the "air bags" article might look like this (in part):

New Rules for Air Bags

Smart technology (19)

 Detects position

 Detects weight

 Detects child-safety seat

Depowering the bags (26)

 Reduce deployment power

 Make a 20-35 percent reduction (27)

3. *Make notes on photocopies.* Avoid making marks on library books and magazines, but do make marginal notes in your own books and magazines or on photocopied materials and printouts.
4. *Write a Rough Summary.* A summary condenses into a brief note the general nature of a source.