

Guidelines for Understanding the Critique of Research Paper #1,
and
for Improving the Clarity and Impact of Future Research Writing

- Your opening abstract should address the importance your research and note your most significant sources. Why is the research done for this paper important? What resources were used, and, briefly, what information have those resources provided?
- The title (and your papers should always have a title) should inform readers about the central subject/issues of your paper. Section headings should inform readers what the sections will be about. Using “Part I” or “Part II” as a title does not help clarify focus, information, or organizing principles.
- **Cite all research/source materials!** Anything that is quoted directly or paraphrased from any source must be properly cited within your paper and documented in a **“References” list**. Check you’re the Research Project’s Web Site for further guidelines on proper referencing and documentation and for avoiding the very serious charge of plagiarism.
- Do not assume a reader will rely on your assignment questions and guidelines to better understand your analyses and evaluations. **Even a reader familiar with the parameters of an assignment will need to see and understand the details/specifics of your response to an assignment’s questions and issues.** Specify your definitions of assignment terms; show the details of your research and of how your research contributes to your evaluations.
- Instead of making broad, declarative statements, define, analyze and use specifics:
 - ✍✍ Define all significant terms. For instance, what, exactly, does “legitimate” mean in the context of Research Assignment #1? Does “legitimate” mean “accurate?” If so, what, exactly, does “accurate” mean (mathematically accurate? accurate according to what kinds of research? accurate according to what criteria?)? Does “legitimate” have legal implications in the context of your paper? Does “legitimate” mean “trustworthy?” Does “legitimate mean “useful”—and if so, “useful” in what ways, and to whom?
 - ✍✍ Having clarified an evaluative term such as “legitimate, “ you will then need to clarify the connections between the details of your research and your evaluative analysis: exactly **how and why** do the details you provide lead to the evaluations you make? Instead of stating, “the site offers numerous publications and has a link to its author, so it is a legitimate site, “ **show** your readers **how** your stated research details **make** a site

“legitimate.” If a site offers “numerous publications,” detail **how and why** these particular and numerous publications confer “legitimacy” on this site. If you claim that “an author,” provides “legitimacy” for a source, your readers need to know the particulars why is this author to be trusted with this information? Does the author have a relevant degree? If so, in what area and from where? (Is a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh more “legitimate” than, say, one from the website DegreeInAYear.edu?). If, in **Research Assignment #2**, you state that you’d want to work for a particular company, **show the reader, in detail, why—what, exactly** according to your research, does the company offer that appeals to you? What is it about you that would make a good match with this company?

✍️ When you say that a web site is “fairly simple in design” or a source is “useful to anyone seeking a job,” the reader does not see what you see. Describe the “simplicity” or “usefulness”; use specifics to demonstrate simplicity of design or usefulness of job-seeking information. **If you describe a company, in Assignment # 2 as an “important” company in your field, show, in concrete detail,** what the company has done to earn this evaluation. Your reader can then see what you see, and can understand the basis for your evaluations and conclusions.

✍️ By simply making a general evaluative conclusion, you’re stating a potentially unfounded opinion. If you want to establish information as “factual,” you need to show your reader **how and why** this information is “factual.” What research supports these “facts?” What sources—studies, qualifications, investigations, projects—demonstrate that the information is “factual?”

Feel free to come to **the University of Pittsburgh’s Writing Center** (<http://www.english.pitt.edu/resources/writecent.html>) for free, one-on-one consultations about Research Assignment #1 or any of the papers you are writing for this project. **The Center’s phone number is 624-6556.** To work with a consultant at the main site in M2 Thaw Hall, call for an appointment. The Center also has **convenient “drop-in” sites (no appointment needed)** in the Tower A, 12th floor lounge, Monday and Wednesday nights from 6:00-9:00, and at Hillman Library, Ground Floor in Tuesdays from 1:00-4:00 and Wednesdays from 9:00-11:30 & 1:30-4:30. Consultants are happy to help you at any stage in the writing process.

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