

A Complete Guide to

Writing Your Research Paper From Start to Finish

Templates, worksheets, and reference guides for every stage of writing a research paper — from choosing a topic to final formatting and submission.

By **Manar Alhejazi**

Getting Started Topic, proposal & thesis	Literature Review & Methodology 9 review types, renaming guide	Analysis & Structure Results, discussion, outlining
Academic Integrity & AI Plagiarism & responsible AI use	Citations APA · Harvard · MLA · IEEE	Formatting & Submission Numbering, templates, checklist

HOW THIS BOOK WORKS	
→ Don't know where to start	Chapter 0
→ Choosing & narrowing a topic	Chapter 1
→ Organizing sources & citations	Chapter 3
→ Writing your literature review	Chapter 4
→ Naming your Methodology / Results sections	Chapters 5-6
→ Checking plagiarism / AI-use rules	Chapter 9
→ Formatting & submitting	Chapters 10-11

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Preface

My research interest began with the enjoyment I found in conducting it. At first, I thought this interest might be temporary. That changed when I presented my graduation project, titled “Verses of Recovery: How Poetry Aids in Healing Trauma,” at the University of Bahrain Undergraduate Research and Innovation Conference 2025 and received enthusiastic praise.

One of the session chairs told me to seriously consider becoming a researcher because, in her words, I already was one. Other faculty members from the College of Arts at the University of Bahrain offered similar encouragement, urging me to pursue postgraduate studies and a research career. This experience marked my entry into academia. As I began building my career, I remained active in my major’s group chat, where I saw that many students felt utterly lost when faced with research methods and terminology. These difficulties were widespread enough that one of my professors wrote a research paper examining the challenges students encountered in the undergraduate research project capstone course and the possible solutions.

I began thinking of ways to help my peers, as well as anyone else struggling with research without access to guidance. My love for research has not faded; I still enjoy every stage of the process. Research allows me to confront the unknown, search for solutions, build knowledge that may benefit others, learn from what previous researchers have discovered, and continue the work they began.

This guide is intended for undergraduate students and independent researchers who need clear, practical support. Research often involves uncertainty, but it can also be engaging and rewarding. I hope this guide helps you approach the process with confidence and find the same enjoyment in research that I have.

How to Use This Book

Getting oriented

This book is built to be used piece by piece, not read start to finish in one sitting. Pull whichever template matches the stage you're at.

Suggested Sequence

Topic → Proposal & Thesis → Organize Sources → Literature Review → Methodology → Draft & Structure
→ Analysis / Discussion → Edit & Revise → Integrity Check → Format & Submit

Quick-Start Guide

- No topic yet? Start at Chapter 1.
- Already have a topic and need a proposal? Jump to Chapter 2.
- Mid-way through writing? Chapter 3 (citations) and Chapter 8 (editing) are built to be used continuously, not just once.
- Confused about what to call a section of your own paper? Chapters 5 and 6 exist for exactly that.
- Almost done? Chapter 11's pre-submission checklist is your last stop.

Choosing & Narrowing Your Topic

Before you can write, you need a question worth answering

Topic Brainstorming Worksheet

Broad area of interest:

e.g., Social media's effect on mental health, or postcolonial themes in modern literature

Why does this interest you?

A sentence or two on what drew you to it — a personal experience, a class discussion, a gap you noticed

Three possible angles on this topic:

List 2–4 different directions you could take it — they don't need to be fully formed yet

Which angle excites you most, and why?

Pick the one you'd still want to be working on in six weeks, and say why

Example

Broad area of interest: Social media's effect on mental health.

Why does this interest you? I've noticed friends changing how they post and compare themselves to others online, and I want to know if there's real evidence behind the anxiety it seems to cause.

Three possible angles: (1) Social comparison and anxiety on Instagram, (2) Sleep disruption from late-night phone use, (3) How platform algorithms reward negative engagement.

Which angle excites me most? The social comparison angle — it connects to psychology research I've already read, and there's enough existing literature to build on.

Research Question Funnel

Broad topic → Narrowed topic → Specific, answerable question

Broad topic:

e.g., Social media use

Narrowed topic:

e.g., Instagram use among university students

Specific research question:

A single, focused question your paper will answer — check it against the testability checklist below

Example A — Social Science

Broad topic: Social media use.

Narrowed topic: Instagram use among university students.

Specific research question: How does daily Instagram use correlate with self-reported social comparison and

anxiety among university students aged 18–24?

Example B — Humanities

Broad topic: Trauma in literature.

Narrowed topic: Trauma in postcolonial fiction.

Specific research question: How does fragmented narrative structure in [Author]'s [Novel] represent the intergenerational transmission of trauma?

Example C — STEM

Broad topic: Renewable energy.

Narrowed topic: Solar panel efficiency in humid climates.

Specific research question: How does ambient humidity affect the energy-conversion efficiency of monocrystalline solar panels?

Is Your Question Testable? Checklist

- ☐ Can be answered with evidence or analysis — not opinion alone
- ☐ Is not a yes/no question
- ☐ Is specific enough to address within the required length
- ☐ Is not so narrow that little to no source material exists
- ☐ You genuinely don't already know the answer

THAT'S THE SAMPLE

Twelve more chapters are waiting.

This preview covered how to choose and narrow a topic. The full guide also covers proposals and thesis statements, citation systems (APA, Harvard, MLA, IEEE, and footnotes), nine types of literature review, naming your Methodology and Results sections, tense and tone by chapter, academic integrity and responsible AI use, formatting mechanics, and more — 30 pages of templates, worksheets, and reference guides in total.

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