## Report Writing Tips

**Why write a research report?**

* To document research results
* To clarify analysis and support conclusions, especially in complex-evidence cases
* To illuminate gaps or “holes” in research
* To preserve and share with others
* To use as an educational tool for less experienced researchers

**Basic Components of a Research Report**

* Statement of research objective
* Background information
* Research process
* Summary of evidence with future research recommendations

These components are integrated into a Research Report, such as in the following report outline:

**Introduction of Research Problem**

1. Statement of research objective
2. Background information
3. Summary of evidence/conclusions (optional)

**Research Process**

1. Compilation of research results
2. Analysis and explanation of all evidence
3. Conclusions that can be drawn from evidence
4. Inclusion of both positive and negative results
5. Support or elimination of theories

**Summary of Evidence and Future Research**

1. Restatement of research objective
2. Summary of evidence / conclusions
3. Future research recommendations

Report formats will vary, and not every report need follow the above report outline. Every research report, however, should include the basic components of a research report mentioned above.

**Research Objective:** A simple statement of the desired outcome. Usually consists of one sentence, but may be a paragraph or longer, that is clearly stated in the introductory section of the report. The objective is usually restated in the report summary with a summary of how the evidence presented in the report either proved, disproved, or supported any theories relating to the research objective.

**Background information:** A brief summary of the factual history of the ancestor or family relevant to the research problem. Background information includes the full name of the ancestor(s) or family of interest; all pertinent dates, birth, marriage, and/or death dates (if known); event localities (known or approximated); known family relationships, and a summary of previous evidence that relates to the research problem. This section is also included in the introductory portion of the report.

**Presenting Evidence in a Report:** Each piece of evidence should be supported by a source citation; analysis when needed; explicit discussion of the evidence; and resolution of any conflicting evidence. The reader should understand how that evidence proves, disproves, or supports any theory related to the research objective. The report narrative should also clearly show how supporting evidence proves any generational or familial relationships, where applicable.

**Summary of Evidence:** The report summary includes a recapitulation of the research objective with conclusions made during the research process that are based on solid evidence and sound research methodology.

**Future research recommendations:** Should be specific and applicable to the stated goal or related to a new goal. They should also include the reason for each search. These recommendations will set the direction for future work on that research problem.

**Writing to the reader audience:**

* Consider how the content of the report will be understood by the reader.
* Include explanations of research methodology on the experience level of the reader.
* Include documentation that supports the facts and conclusions of the report.
* Cite documents in footnotes (or endnotes) using full source citations.
* Include charts, maps, timelines, and tables for clarification and easier understanding of complex evidence.
* Review the written report for consistency in logic and thought.

**Other tips for writing a good research report:**

* Check for typographical errors. Use good grammar.
* Focus on brevity and clarity of thought.
* Avoid unnecessary verbiage and trite phrases.
* Avoid “travelogues”, e.g., I checked here first, and then I checked here next….”
* Be consistent with 1st, 2nd, or 3rd “person” writing.
* Emphasize active voice, not passive, where possible in the report.