



Writing a Term Paper (*Hausarbeit*)

The term paper is the result of a thorough investigation of a particular topic and constitutes the most extensive written assignment you will be asked to produce in a seminar. Therefore, it is important that you consider the following hints.

General hints

These are **the formal guidelines** you are **required** to follow:

- 12 point Times New Roman or 11.5 Arial
- 1.5 line spacing,
- wide enough margin for comments and corrections,
- you should indent your paragraphs,
- the paper should amount to 5-7 pages (**PS Staatsexamen**), 12-15 pages (**PS B.A., B.Ed.**), 15-20 pages (**HS**), 8-10 pages (**Master 5 CP**), 20-25 pages (**Master 8 CP**) – not including the title page, table of contents, bibliography, and the obligatory statement of autonomy.

Please hand in your paper in **print**, and send a **PDF** version to your teacher.

Language and style

- try to avoid an overly complicated sentence structure,
- employ the respective terminology of the field of research in which you are writing your essay,
- explain technical and other important terms.

However, your style must meet academic standards by being explicit, unambiguous and neutral.

Moreover:

- use phrases to evaluate your statements: e.g. "certainly", "likely", "probably", "possibly"
- do not use "I", "me", "my" etc. too often,
- do not use verb contractions (i.e. no "isn't", "she's", "don't" etc.);
- do not translate quotes from the most important European languages; however, you could provide translations or paraphrases in footnotes.

Make sure that your essay is linguistically correct (spell-checking, correct use of idioms and collocations etc.).

Paragraphs

- structure your text visibly by using paragraphs, each paragraph should explore one particular aspect of your argumentation,
- indent the first line of each paragraph.

Your final term paper should look like this (please stick to this outline also when writing a short paper of 5-7 pages; in this case, your table of contents need not be as comprehensive, of course):¹

a) Title Page

- Essay title (clear, precise and concise statement of your essay topic),
- Date of submission,
- Course title,
- Supervisor
- Institution,
- Student name,
- Prüfungsnummer,
- eMail address,
- Matriculation number.

b) Table of Contents

- comprehensible,
- fitting to the leading question,
- avoid just numbering your chapters like 1., 2., 3. etc., make sure you break the topic down into different aspects of analysis (e.g. 2.1, 2.2, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.3 etc.), especially in comprehensive term papers of more than 12 pages.

c) Introduction (approx. 10% of the paper)

In the Introduction, you should answer the following questions:

- What is your aim?
- What are the key questions you want to examine?
- Why is your topic relevant?
- What is your material?
- What is the method/theoretical approach you are using?
- What is the structure of the essay/your procedure?

¹ If you are writing your final thesis (i.e. Bachelor or Master Thesis), you must enclose an Abstract in English: this is a short, objective and non-redundant description of the leading question and the result of the essay (no more than 200 words).

d) **Main Body** (to be named according to your topic)

The main body of your paper should demonstrate the following points:

- use of relevant secondary literature,
- comprehensible structure and argumentation (Do not present a random selection of findings – what you include should be relevant for the topic at hand.),
- correct and logical argumentation within the field of research,
- **visible/recognisable student's contribution** (the mere presentation of secondary literature is no independent achievement and should not be the main part of the essay!), e.g. depiction of the leading question with individually chosen examples, comparison of different theories, critical reflection of secondary literature, presentation of different approaches.

Opinion vs. Interpretation

When writing a term paper, you may be wondering what amount of input should come from secondary literature and to what extent you may express your personal opinion. There can be no simple answer to that question in terms of percentages. What you should demonstrate in your paper (concerning academic writing) is the **ability to work with academic research and to reflect on sources critically**.

Of course, your individual take on the primary text plays a major role in your interpretation, but this should not limit your reading to a bunch of personal statements like, "In my opinion, the text is very funny." You should be particularly careful to avoid purely subjective comments (like how interesting/entertaining you found the text), though you may of course include statements on *what* exactly made the text fascinating or problematic. However, your evaluation of that should be linked to analytical criteria – what textual phenomena triggered your response?

e) **Conclusion** (approx. 10% of the paper)

- return to the original thesis/ leading question,
- short and precise summary of your findings,
- evaluation/ conclusion / outlook.

f) **Bibliography** (Works Cited)

- list all the materials you have worked with,
- distinguish between primary and secondary sources if useful,
- refer to a sufficient number of up-to-date sources. You can only arrive at a well-founded term paper if you have consulted a sufficient number of sources including monographs and academic essays. You may use online sources that are of academic quality. However, online sources must not outnumber print sources.
- correct use of style sheet!

g) **Appendix** (if necessary and useful)

- complete,
- correctly labelled.

h) **Statement of Autonomy** (*Selbständigkeitserklärung*)

[German] Ich versichere, dass ich die beiliegende Arbeit ohne Hilfe Dritter und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel einschließlich des Internets angefertigt und die den benutzten Quellen wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen als solche kenntlich gemacht habe.

[English] I herewith affirm that I have composed the thesis presented autonomously and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages in the text that were extracted from other works either literally or accordingly were identified as borrowings.

→ Please sign this statement.

Plagiarism

Of course, the faculty policy regarding plagiarism applies:

Prüfungsordnung § 17 (3):

(3) Versucht die oder der Studierende, das Ergebnis einer Prüfungsleistung durch Täuschung, Plagiat (ganz oder zu Teilen) oder Benutzung nicht zugelassener Hilfsmittel zu beeinflussen, wird die entsprechende Prüfungsleistung insgesamt mit "nicht ausreichend" (5,0) bewertet.

PrOBA SLK – ANLAGE C:

Unter einem Plagiat ist im Rahmen einer Prüfungsleistung der Umstand zu verstehen, dass eine Studentin oder ein Student eine schriftliche Arbeit einreicht, die *wörtlich oder nahezu wörtlich, ganz oder zu Teilen* aus einer Arbeit oder mehreren Arbeiten (publiziert im Internet, in Zeitschriften, Monographien etc.) anderer ohne entsprechende Kennzeichnung übernimmt und dies damit *als eigene Leistung ausgibt*. In diesem Sinn liegt auch dann ein Plagiat vor, wenn bei der Übernahme in eine andere Sprache als die des Originals *übersetzt* wurde.

Sinngemäße Übernahmen und wörtliche, in Anführungszeichen gesetzte bzw. anders entsprechend ausgewiesene Übernahmen, die unter Angabe der Quelle als solche gekennzeichnet sind, fallen nicht unter diese Definition.

In-text citation and footnotes

If you refer to the works of others in your text, you should use what is known as parenthetical citation (and not footnotes). This method involves placing relevant source information in parentheses after a quote or a paraphrase.

The advantage of this citation style is that you do not need to use **footnotes** for references. Still, it often makes sense to work with footnotes in order to give additional information, refer to other useful texts, suggest a further line of argument etc. In other words, footnotes should be used to add information which would, if included in the text, disrupt the coherence of your argument and fluency of the text.

Do not use special fonts to highlight the author's name, such as *italics* or (SMALL) CAPITALS.

*Primary sources*²

When **citing your primary sources** (such as literary or religious works), it is best to introduce an abbreviation in parentheses immediately after the first use of the full title. From then on, just use this abbreviation (together with the page number, of course) to refer to this work.

e.g. In his novel *The Remains of the Day* (*Remains*), Kazuo Ishiguro tells the story of a butler who solely relies on his employer's judgment. In the end, the protagonist admits that he may have put too much trust "in his lordship's wisdom" (*Remains* 256).

When citing a play, use act, scene and line numbers—in that order and separated by periods—rather than page numbers.

e.g.: (*Ham.* 5.4.27-32) for *Hamlet*, Act 5, Scene 4, Lines 27-32

Secondary sources

Generally, parenthetical documentation of **secondary literature** includes the author's last name followed by a page reference. (See below for examples.)

Direct quote—author's name in reference:

"Miss Emily turns out to be not a Southern lady; she is a Clytemnestra, a figure out of tragedy" (Brooks 161).

Direct quote—if the author's name already features in the text:

Brooks explains that "Miss Emily turns out to be not a Southern lady; instead, she is a Clytemnestra, a figure out of tragedy" (161).

Paraphrasing—author's name in reference:

Miss Emily and her madness are likened to the tragic character of Clytemnestra (Brooks 161).

Paraphrasing— if the author's name already features in the text:

Brooks likens Miss Emily and her madness to the tragic character of Clytemnestra (161).

A corresponding entry must be included in your bibliography (works cited):

Brooks, Cleanth. *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1978.

² It is not always possible to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. In this case, treat all your sources as secondary sources. If you work with primary and secondary sources, you should list them separately in the bibliography.

If you are citing a work with no author or editor, incorporate the title of the work into the reference. Use the complete title if brief; otherwise, use an abbreviated version. Provide enough of the title so that it can be easily located in the works cited.

e.g.: Fifty-three percent of Grenada's population is Roman Catholic ("Grenada").

Your bibliography must then, of course, feature the complete entry:

"Grenada." *The World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency, 6 July 2009.

<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gj.html>> 17 Jan. 2012.

If your works-cited list includes two or more works by the same author, you must include the title (or part of the title) in the parenthetical reference. If the author's name is given in the text, only the title and page number(s) are necessary.

e.g.: (Brooks, *Faulkner* 30) and (Brooks, *Poetry* 47).

If your works-cited list has two authors with the same last name, include their first initials.

Write out full first names if initials are identical.

e.g.: (C. Brooks 20) and (G. Brooks 99-100)

What happens when the work you are citing references another work?

If you are quoting or paraphrasing a quotation from a second-hand (or indirect) source, put the abbreviation *qtd. in* ("quoted in") before the indirect source you cite in your parenthetical reference.³ The corresponding works cited entry is for the actual source you used.

e.g.: In an interview with Grenier, Faulkner calls himself a "failed poet" (qtd. in Brooks 55).

When a quotation runs to more than four typed lines, set it off from the text by beginning the quotation on a new line and by indenting the entire quotation one inch (or ten spaces) from the left margin. The quotation should be single-spaced. Do not add quotation marks. Place the parenthetical reference after the period of the last sentence of the quotation; leave a space between the period and the parenthetical reference.

When eliminating words in a direct quote, use an ellipsis [...].

³ In German, the respective abbreviation is "zit. nach".