



# SECTION I

## Writing Term Papers About Archaeology

One of the things archaeologists need to be able to do is to communicate about their findings to both public and professional audiences. Effective communication can take both written and oral forms, but both take practice. For this reason, archaeology instructors require their students to demonstrate what they have learned in a variety of ways. However, research or term papers are one common assignment in archaeology classes. Term papers provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate some of what you have learned over the course of the semester while providing you with practice in writing. Term papers also give you an opportunity to hone your research skills and to practice your critical thinking. In this section, we provide some general guidelines for completing these kinds of assignments including suggestions about the process of writing and the mechanics of a term paper. Some of this advice may be relevant to other kinds of writing you have to do as well. Of course, your professor will give you specific details on the kind of paper he or she is assigning as well as indicate the kind of topics that are appropriate.

### **DEVELOPING YOUR TOPIC**

In selecting a topic, it is important to consider your professor's guidelines carefully, but most professors will give you some leeway in the specific topic you choose. The successful term papers are usually on topics that both relate to the class and interest you. If you already have an interest in an archaeological topic, you can choose that, but if you don't have such an interest, you might consider doing a paper on the archaeology of an area where you have lived or have visited.

The secret to a good topic is to keep it manageable. Remember that even selecting a topic can take research. Students often pick large issues as their term paper topics and then have trouble covering the topic. As you begin research, look for ways to narrow your paper to something that you can accomplish within the time available to you. One way to do this is to write a topic statement, do some of your research, and then rewrite the topic statement. As you see what kinds of information are available, it will be easy to refine your topic and adjust it to the material that is available. If you are required to submit a topic statement to your professor, be sure to give yourself time to begin your research and refine the topic before this is due.

## RESEARCH

Where do you do your research? Your textbook can be a good starting place. Find the chapter or chapters that are most closely related to your topic, and check the references and suggested readings for the chapter to get some references to begin your research. If you get in the habit of checking each source's in-text citations and reference list, they will lead you to other relevant sources until you have found what you need.

You can also start with encyclopedias and general works held by your university library. Most instructors won't want you to rely solely on such secondary works, but they may contain discussion of your topic and citations for important sources. Your library may have a variety of research guides and databases that you can search for relevant information as well. If you are not familiar with these, check for an online tutorial. You may also want to take a short course provided by your librarian so that you learn how to use the research tools available to you.

Today, the Internet can also provide a good starting point, but you have to be careful with such sources. There is no check on what can be posted, and often erroneous information masquerading as facts wind up on web pages. Archaeology is especially vulnerable to such hoaxes and frauds, so you have to be careful what Internet sources you choose. Evaluating the validity of references is part of the critical thinking skills that you practice in writing a term paper. Here are some suggestions for evaluating sources:

1. Are references provided so you can follow the evidence for the claims presented? If not, you will not want to pay much attention to it.
2. Who is making the claim? People who are not professional archaeologists have made great contributions to the discipline, but people without credentials often make wild claims about the past.
3. What is the motivation of the individual or individuals making the claim? The tone of a paper trying to advance knowledge is often noticeably different from that of an article or website trying to bring fame and attention to the people who are promoting the ideas. Pay attention to the tone, and avoid sources making extravagant claims.
4. Is the website or publication connected to an institution of learning, or is it an independent website? Not all information found on university or museum websites is necessarily accurate, but they are usually reliable. Websites that are not affiliated can be reliable, as well, but they can also be

poor sources. If you cannot easily tell who is behind a website or publication, be suspicious.

Archaeology journals, both national and regional, are good sources for most topics. You can consult popular magazines like *Archaeology* and *American Archaeology*, but there are also professional journals like *American Antiquity* and *North American Archaeologist* as well as regional journals like *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, *California Archaeology*, *Plains Anthropologist*, and *the MidContinental Journal of Archaeology*. Spend some time learning what publications on archaeology cover your area of study. Through your library you even may have access to journals online, and many journals have an index that can be helpful as you search for relevant articles.

As you research, you will find reference to books and articles that will have direct bearing on your topic. Finding and digesting these will give you the material you need to write. Much of the research can be done from your computer. There is no substitute for going to the library, however, and you will probably have to get books you need anyway. Even if everything is available on computer, it can be a good idea to risk a paper cut and look at some actual print media. In addition to experiencing the library, you may also experience that library serendipity when you are looking for a particular book on the shelves and manage to find instead an even better one that you did not yet know to look for.

One other source of good information and leads are colleagues. Talking to other students with an interest in archaeology may well lead to some important resources for your work.

## PAPER STRUCTURE

As your research progresses, you will start having inspirations about how the paper should be organized. There are a number of ways you can go with organization, and some individual creativity can be good. Your professor may have specific guidelines you must follow, but a typical paper might be organized around the following outline.

- I. Introduction.** This section lays out your topic and how you plan to go about addressing it. Your topic should be clearly stated. You should also provide enough discussion of the topic to let readers know whether it is something that would interest them. If you already have written a topic statement, you may incorporate parts of it into your introduction.
- II. Literature Review.** This section deals with the results of your research. You will summarize what has been written about your topic.
- III. Results.** Your discussion of the topic is contained in this section. Here you have the meat of your paper.
- IV. Conclusions.** Your discussion of the topic goes in this section. The basis for each conclusion will have already been laid out in the Results section.
- V. References cited.** Here is where you list your sources. You must provide a source for every fact or bit of information you use.
- VI. Appendix (optional).** This is a place for large data tables or text that supports your analysis.

## WRITING

Once you have your research done and your outline developed, you can begin writing. Your writing should be more formal than everyday conversation, and text message abbreviations are definitely out of place in a term paper. You may want to ask your professor about his or her preference concerning the use of the first person (I or we) as it may or may not be appropriate depending on your topic. Your writing should not be overly formal, however. Your goal is to communicate your points, not to impress your professor with your vocabulary.

There are some common pitfalls you should strive to avoid:

1. Unnecessarily complicated language.
2. Inappropriately informal language.
3. Concepts you don't understand. If you don't understand it, it doesn't belong in the paper.
4. Facts or ideas for which no source is given. Failure to properly cite and credit your sources is a serious problem and may be an academic violation. See Mechanics for how to avoid plagiarizing.
5. Too many quotations. If most of your paper is quotes, it indicates that you haven't really synthesized the information.
6. Adding additional, redundant discussion to boost the page length of the paper.
7. Failure to spell and grammar check your work. Be sure to actually proof-read carefully in addition to using your word processor's capabilities. Spell-check programs don't find words that are spelled correctly but are not right for the context ("from" when you meant "form" or "their" when you meant "there").

## MECHANICS

Your paper should be printed on plain white paper using a standard typeface that is easily read. Your professor will have enough work reading the term papers she or he assigns without having to deal with unnecessarily frilly typefaces. Times New Roman is always a good bet, but others will do. Your professor may have a preference. Twelve-point type is a good, readable size. Smaller type can be hard to read. Larger type just makes for more pages and is not a way to lengthen your paper to meet page limits.

Your paper should have 1-inch margins on all sides. Page numbers can be placed below the lower margin or above the upper margin, but all pages after the first should be numbered. Unless your professor requires a cover sheet, the course number, name, and section should be right-justified in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. Below that should be the date. Your title should be centered just below the last line of the course and date block. The title should be something that describes what you are writing about and not simply "Term Paper." Your name should be centered below the title. Unless your professor prefers fancy covers, it is best to simply staple the paper in the upper left-hand corner and leave the cover off (Appendix J.1).

## DATES

Archaeology papers often include dates, and there are conventions for how to list them that require a little attention on your part. While general references to dates (e.g., 7000 years ago) don't require special formatting, more specific dates often do. Date ranges should be given in full: 1950–1999 rather than 1950–99. For AD and BC dates, remember to place AD before the year, but BC after it (e.g., AD 900, but 9000 BC). If your paper includes radiocarbon dates, you should cite the source where you found the date and give the date precisely as the original author did. Convention dictates that the first direct citation of a radiocarbon date should be given in uncalibrated radiocarbon age (e.g., 1020  $\pm$  40 BP Beta XXXXXX) with the lab and sample number indicated, but it is unlikely that you will be referencing a date for the first time. However, it is important that you use the 1-sigma standard error (e.g., 3540  $\pm$  50 BP) if it is given in your source. This includes giving calibrated date ranges for specific dates clearly marked as such (e.g., 2279–2232 cal BC). Radiocarbon ages with five digits have commas, but those with four digits do not.

## CITATIONS

At this point in your academic career, you should have a clear idea of what plagiarism is. Every semester, however, professors are disappointed to find papers that are made up of unreferenced information, sometimes taken directly, without even paraphrasing, from another work. The point of the paper is for you to research, understand, analyze, and discuss ideas on your own. Keep in mind that every fact and every opinion that is not your own must be referenced. You must both acknowledge the source and allow the reader to recreate your research. If you borrow someone else's words and ideas, you must acknowledge them through citation.

Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks and cited with the page number in the original source included. If your quotation is more than three lines long, you should set it off and indent it. Simply paraphrasing the work of others as if it were your own also will not do and is dishonest. Neither will stringing together paragraphs copied directly from Internet sources, even if these sources are listed in your References Cited section. Taking a paragraph from the Internet and including it verbatim or paraphrased, without citation as you use it is still plagiarism because it is not your work, your thoughts, your ideas. You should become well versed in what constitutes plagiarism and what is acceptable practice. Your college or university should have plenty of material for you on this topic in its student handbook. Take the time to study this material if you have any questions.

The most common form of citation and reference format used by archaeologists in North America is probably the *American Antiquity* format. In this format, text citations appear in parentheses and include the author's name and date of publication, at a minimum (e.g., Neusius 2010). If the information being cited is a direct quotation or if it is a very specific piece of information (particularly from a larger work), a page number should be given as well. For example, if you wanted to cite artifact types reported for a specific site in Morratto's *California Archaeology*, your citation should be (Moratto 1984:191). Note that a

colon separates the page number from the date. Moratto's book is over 750 pages. If you don't provide the page number for specific facts like this, the reference is of little value to your reader. As needed you may include the authors name in the body of your sentence placing only the date and page number in parentheses. For example you might say, "Moratto (1984:191) identifies the following projectile point types."

When citing a work by a single author, the author's last name, date, and possibly the page number appear in the citation, as in the foregoing Moratto reference. When there are two authors, both names appear in the reference (e.g., Neusius and Flint 1985). When there are three or more authors, the citation lists the last name of the first author followed by the words "et al.," meaning "and others," as in (Gamble et al. 2001). As will be discussed shortly, when citing more than one publication by an author or identical group of authors for the same year, letters are assigned to those publications in the order in which they appear in the references list (Kohler 1992a).

## REFERENCES

The references cited section should contain only material actually cited in the paper. The list should be alphabetized by author's last name. References should be typed left-justified. The author's name, last name first for the first author, goes on the first line of the reference. On the second line appears the date of publication, the title (in italics in the case of a book), the publisher, and the place of publication. The title and the publisher information are separated by a period. An example for a book by a single author is:

Moss, Madonna L.

2011 *Northwest Coast: Archaeology as Deep History*. Society for American Archaeology, Washington, D.C.

When two or more authors are involved, whether it is for a book or an article, the first author is listed last name first, but the subsequent authors are listed first name first and are separated by commas.

Neusius, Sarah W., and G. Timothy Gross

2007 *Seeking Our Past: An Introduction to North American Archaeology*. Oxford University Press, New York.

For a journal article, the author's name or names appear on the first line as above. On the second line are the date of publication, the title, and the journal title. Following the journal title (in italics) are the volume number and the page numbers on which the article appears. If the volume consists of several numbered issues, each of which starts over with page 1, then it is important that the issue number be included in parentheses between the volume number and the page number. A colon comes between the page numbers and either the volume or issue number.

Schulting, Rick

1994 The Hair of the Dog: the Identification of a Coast Salish Dog-Hair Blanket from Yale, British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 18:57-76.

For an edited book, the format for a book is followed and "editors" is indicated in parentheses after the author's name.

Cordell, Linda S., and George J. Gummerman (editors)  
2006 *Dynamics of Southwest Prehistory*. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

For a paper in an edited volume:

Judge, W. James  
2006 Chaco Canyon—San Juan Basin. In *Dynamics of Southwest Prehistory*,  
edited by Linda  
S. Cordell and George J. Gummerman, pp. 209–261. University of Alabama Press,  
Tuscaloosa.

Citing material from the Internet can be confusing, but citing it properly is essential. Because the Internet changes so frequently, it is critical to include the dates on which you accessed the website. Here are two examples:

American Museum of Natural History  
2012 Hidden Cave, Nevada. Electronic document, [http://research.amnh.org/anthropology/research/naa/hidden\\_cave](http://research.amnh.org/anthropology/research/naa/hidden_cave), accessed April 29, 2012.

Pastore, Ralph T.  
1998 Palaeo-Eskimo Peoples. Electronic document, <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/aboriginal/palaeo.html#predorset>, accessed April 29, 2012.

There are a number of other kinds of references that you may have, but these are the most common. For further guidance, refer to the American Antiquity Style Guide online. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.saa.org/Portals/0/SAA/Publications/StyleGuide/styleguide.pdf?>

## A FINAL WORD ABOUT TERM PAPER WRITING

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about writing a term paper is to give yourself enough time to accomplish it. Producing a paper you are proud of and do well on requires time.

The name “term paper” should imply to you that you are to work on it all semester long, even when you do not have a specific assignment related to it. Begin your research early. If your library is small or your topic very specific, you may find it useful to use interlibrary loan services that can give you access to books and articles held by other libraries, but to do this, you need lead time. You should also give yourself enough time to write. Some students expect to their paper in one sitting, but this isn’t realistic. It can help the clarity of your paper to produce a draft and then set it aside overnight or longer. When you return to it, you will be reading it with fresh eyes, and you may be able to tell where you need to edit much more easily. Having someone else read your paper can also help you improve its logic and clarity, and having someone else proofread it is especially useful.

We hope this brief introduction to writing term papers in archaeology is helpful to you. If you are a relative novice with respect to research and writing, we hope our discussion demystifies the process. Even if you have written term papers before for other courses, this short section should help you understand the style and format most common in archaeology. Once you have done several archaeology term papers, we expect that it won’t seem difficult at all to meet the expectations and requirements of your professors, but that this section may still be a good review as you begin the process.

**APPENDIX I.1****Sample Cover Page**

Anthropology 330 D  
North American Archaeology  
Section 01  
May 1, 2012

The Head First Site and Its Contribution to San Diego Prehistory  
Dolores A. Project

Despite its checkered history, excavations at the Head First site have yielded a large amount of data that have led to some very interesting interpretations about both Southern California prehistory and about the nature of coastal adaptations. At least one of the excavations also saw the first use of ground-penetrating radar as a tool to locating buried rock features in Southern California (Weatherson 1955). It is unfortunate that the controversies concerning the site and the disposition of the collections from the most extensive excavation have overshadowed these contributions.

The origin of the name “Head First” is not at all clear. One account has the name deriving from the fact that a local folk and rock band used to practice in an old barn on the property (Sable and Sable 1982:15). A more plausible explanation, offered by the director of the first excavations at the site by the Los Peñasquitos Archaeological Society (LPAS), is that the members of that first avocational crew began to refer to the site by that name when it became clear that they had jumped into the project headfirst, without thoroughly checking into what they were getting into (Haney 1962:2). Even if the latter explanation is not the correct one, it is apparent that this was just the case—LPAS had no idea what they were getting into.

In this paper I will discuss the history of the excavation and the problems with excavation techniques at each stage. I will also address the controversies about the site before summarizing.