

Argumentative Essay: Research and Note Taking

Extended Writing Project Prompt and Directions:

Every day the media run headlines celebrating heroes among us. The firefighter who charges into the burning building to save an infant is a hero. The nurse who risks her own life to help patients with infectious diseases—she’s a hero too. What qualities do all heroes have in common? What makes one person more heroic than another?

Your argumentative essay with research should include:

- an explicitly stated claim about the individual who you think is the most heroic
- a logically organized argument supported by persuasive reasons and relevant textual evidence
- information from one unit text and at least one other print or digital source
- citations of your sources and a Works Cited page
- a conclusion that restates your claim, sums up your reasons and evidence, and leaves your readers with an original thought about the topic

Research is how you find new information or double-check facts or ideas that you don’t know for sure. Research can be as straightforward as checking a word’s meaning in the dictionary or as challenging as trying a new activity to get first-hand experience. Unless you have a perfect memory (and few of us do), **note-taking** is essential to good research. Each time you check a source, you should take notes.

A **source** might be a textbook, a newspaper article, a website, a dictionary, or an authority on a subject. Your **notes** should include the title of the source, its author’s name, its date of publication, and any information and ideas you learned from it relevant to your research.

Why do you need all this in your notes? You might need to go back later to double-check a fact. You also need this information in order to prepare citations and a Works Cited section in your writing. Finally, your readers can use the information about your sources to do their own research.

Remember your purpose for doing research. In this unit, you are writing an argumentative essay. The point of your research is to find facts, details, and quotations that help support your claim about your topic.

Identification and Application:

- Keep in mind questions you asked during prewriting as you think about your topic and do research. More questions should come up as you research to help you determine what you really need to know and want to say.
- Enter specific keywords and phrases when researching online. You will likely have to experiment with the words and phrases in order to find accurate and reliable sources.
- Think about the accuracy and reliability of your sources. To choose sources carefully:
 - Look for reputable sources, such as fact-based newspapers, magazines, and academic journals and government websites (those ending in *.edu* and *.gov.*)
- Take careful notes. If you prefer to write your notes on index cards, use one card for each source:
 - Front Side: should include the title, author, and publication information on the card. Include a page number for print sources is also necessary.
 - Back Side: Quote or paraphrase a source, write down the words exactly as they appear in the source and place them within quotation marks. Be sure to credit the source.
**Number multiple cards for the same source in order.*

Stay focused when you take notes. To stay focused:

- Look for the answers to your research questions.
- Think about your purpose and audience.
- Don't get distracted by irrelevant information.

Practice:

Research a quotation about the person you will be discussing in your essay on heroism. Write down the quotation exactly as it appears in the source. Then for practice, restate the quotation in your own words and cite its source. As always, record the source's title, author, date, publication, and page number information in your notes.