

**Research Paper Step One:
Choosing a topic and thesis, oral presentation, and list of references**

For this term, the general topic of *domestic and family violence* has been chosen. However, you must develop a more specific topic. Ask yourself, “When considering all the potential issues related to domestic and family violence, I would like to know more about?” and, “Is there an area in which I already have particular knowledge?” For example, if you are presently employed with or intend to pursue a career in the area of law enforcement, you might consider examining the effects of occupational stress on engaging in domestic violence. If you decided to examine something from a societal perspective, you can analyze public perceptions about domestic and family violence, enforcement of mandatory arrest, or other policies. Does the community believe police officers are effective at preventing and reducing domestic violence? Do public awareness campaigns addressing domestic or family violence work?

In the course of narrowing your topic, you will need to conduct research on the web and/or at the library. As a source of supplemental information, you may interview a professional in the field; however, the interview will not count as one of the required sources for your paper. You will need to choose a topic that can be handled in a 12 page paper.

Example of a specific topic: The impact of coping mechanisms on decreasing recidivist incidents of domestic and family violence

Development of Thesis

A crucial step in writing is the determination of a clear thesis which can be supported. The thesis differs from the topic in that the topic tells what you are writing about, while the thesis states what you are going to say about the topic. For example, if the topic is: "The relationship between education and the likelihood of someone perpetrating domestic or family violence" then one might develop the following thesis: "People with a college education are less likely to perpetrate domestic or family violence than those with only a high school diploma."

Keep in mind that you are not being graded on your opinion, but on your ability to communicate and support a point of view (your thesis). Supporting the thesis means utilizing appropriate and compelling evidence to clarify and support the point of view; that evidence will come from your research.

If you run into trouble researching a topic or finding articles to include on the reference list, consult the MLK library liaison for the HPRF department (see below), or see your instructor for advice:

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APA References List assignment (see your course schedule for the due date)

Your list of references will consist of **(10) scholarly peer reviewed journal articles** (no books, web sites, newspapers, or magazines) which relate to your topic, which you may and should use for your research paper. At least half (i.e., five) of the journal articles listed need to be empirical/quantitative research studies, the other half may be more theoretical in nature.

- The list needs to be typewritten in APA style format, with the heading: **References** (centered at the top of the page)
- On a separate page, you must include a brief explanation (1-2 sentences) about why the article will potentially be useful for your paper.
- You will find information about numerous APA resources available in your syllabus, on various handouts, and on the HPRF100W page at: www.justice-studies.com
- The purpose of this preliminary list of sources is to show that you are able to do the research and find appropriate articles. You may end up not using all of the articles in your final paper.

Topic and Thesis Presentation (see your course schedule for the due date)

You will be presenting your topic and thesis orally to the class. You may use one 4X6 note card to help you with your presentation if you wish. The presentations are brief, no Power Points will be allowed.

On the day of the presentation (before presenting), you will turn in the following to the instructor:

1. A half page (min.) to one page (max.) typed write-up of your topic and your thesis.
2. One hard copy of your APA References List assignment

After your topic and thesis have been presented in class, the viability of your topic and thesis will be addressed. Whether a topic and thesis are deemed viable for the research paper assignment will depend to a large degree on the availability of peer reviewed articles, in support of the thesis.