

Research Paper Organizer Lesson Plan

McREL Standards

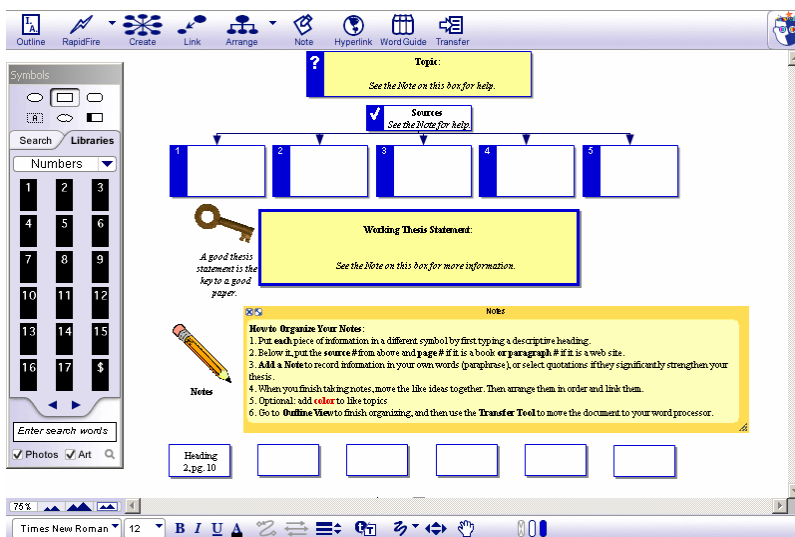
- Gathers and uses information for research purposes
- Organizes information and ideas from multiple sources in systematic ways
- Writes research papers

Grade Level: 6 – 12


Teacher Instructions

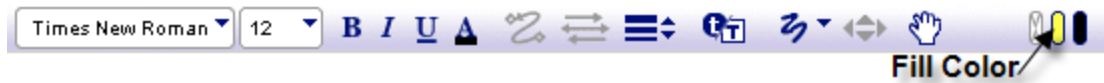
The ability to organize and use information from multiple sources and write research papers are challenging but important tasks for students. The *Research Paper Organizer* student template is a powerful tool to make the process much easier; it should also help students develop skills that will have a profound affect on their ability to succeed in any academic setting. The skills learned will also serve students well as they learn to make well-reasoned decisions in today's world which can have an overwhelming amount of information.

This lesson requires the Inspiration[®] software application published by Inspiration[®] Software, Inc.; 30-day trials can be accessed from the Inspiration[®] Software, Inc. evaluation CD or by visiting www.inspiration.com/freetrial.



1. Explain to the students that it is very important for them to have a system for organizing research papers, and that this visual organizer is an excellent system for making this process easier.



2. Have students choose a general topic to begin researching and record it in the space provided. As students uncover good sources in print or online, they should record the bibliographic information on a separate numbered symbol. If they have more than five sources, students can copy and paste one symbol to make more. Usually don't use copy and paste as the way to create symbols... also since these use the numbers you may want to go to the library and grab the next number... Students should be encouraged to record every potentially good source they encounter, even if they are unsure if they will use it in the final paper.
3. If students need help preparing the source cards, there are many free resources available online such as the Citation Machine: citationmachine.net. They should also know that they can hyperlink web resources to the organizer using the **Hyperlink** tool, or by simply inserting URLs (web addresses) in the document.
4. Ideally students should have access to a complete style guide such as the one produced by the Modern Language Association: www.mla.org.
5. As students delve deeper into the research process, they should formulate questions and answers about the nature of their topic, with a goal of defining a thesis statement. Explain to them that a thesis statement is normally one sentence that states what one will attempt to prove in the paper. For example, in the case of the World War I example, the thesis identifies several causes that will be discussed in the paper
6. Students can begin to take notes in the **Notes** section at the bottom of the document even before they have written a thesis statement. Explain the following system to the students:
 - a. Put each piece of information in a different symbol by first typing a descriptive heading.
 - b. Below it put the source # from the Sources section at the top of the Organizer and page # if it is a book or paragraph # if it is a web site.
 - c. Add a **Note** to record information in your own words (paraphrase), or select quotations if they significantly strengthen your thesis.
 - d. When you finish taking notes, move the like ideas together. Then arrange them in order and link them.
 - e. If a topic has subtopics connected to it, you can use the **Subtopic Quick Control**  in the upper-right corner to show or hide the subtopics.
 - f. Go to Outline View to finish organizing, and then use the Transfer Tool to move the document to your word processor to write your research paper.
 - g. Optional: add color to the topics in the Notes section to more easily differentiate them as shown in the example (research paper-example.isf). Multiple symbols can be selected and colored at once by clicking and dragging around them or by holding the Shift key to select multiple items. Then fill colors can be changed in the **Formatting Toolbar** on the bottom of the screen:



Assessment

- It is very important to check student progress as they undertake the challenging process of writing a research paper. For example, student organizers can be checked after they have chosen a topic and identified several good sources. They can be checked again when they have about 10 notes and a thesis statement.
- Prior to turning in their completed paper, students can be assessed on their diagram and their outline

Lesson Adaptations

- Students can make presentations to the class using either the **Diagram** or **Outline** view. Subtopics can be hidden or viewed using the **Subtopic Quick Control**  in the upper-right corner of **Symbols** with subtopics (or  in the left margin in **Outline** view).
- Rather than complete an entire research paper, students could submit a completed organizer including notes arranged in a web or a completed outline.
- This lesson can be used across multiple content areas: Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, and any other subject that assigns papers.
- College and graduate students could also use this organizer to complete research papers more quickly and easily.