

Organization/ Outline problems: Your paper is in need of a strong outline. An outline is like a roadmap. Decide what your 3 subtopics (themes) are, group ideas together in each subtopic, and put them in the order that makes the most sense. For each new subtopic, start a new paragraph. Subtopics should have 2 or 3 paragraphs. Then, follow the map from one subtopic to the other, but don't go back and forth between them.

I think this is the best order of subtopics in your paper:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Organization/Thesis Statement: Your paper is missing a strong thesis statement. The thesis statement is in your first paragraph, and tells the reader what your paper is about. Strong introductions also tell me why I should want to read your paper. Your thesis statement should answer the big "how" or "why" question you are asking about your topic.

Example of unacceptable thesis statement: "My paper will be about Inca roads." Better: "Despite having to cross the Andes Mountains, the amazing roads of the Inca kept an empire together."

Organization / Conclusion: The last paragraph of your report is a conclusion. A strong conclusion is like an exclamation point for your paper. It's your last chance to convince your reader that your paper is important. If you can answer one of these questions, you'll probably write an acceptable conclusion:

- a) What is interesting about your topic?
- b) Why is your topic important?
- c) What was entertaining, surprising or funny about your topic?
- d) What did you think you might learn, but didn't?
- e) What did people back then have in common with people today? Or what was different?

Transition problems / Organization: Transitions are sentences that help you move from one subtopic to the next. They are usually the first sentence of the new subtopic. Begin each new subtopic with a sentence that compares the new idea that you're about to write about with the one that you just wrote about. Perhaps it's similar or you might point out a difference. Perhaps one idea is bigger, older, newer, stronger, weaker or more unexpected. Your comparisons help the reader to see how you're thinking about a topic.

Knowledge and Understanding / Voice: One of the things missing from your paper is "voice." It's one thing to see that you've found a lot of facts about your topic. It's another thing to see that you've done some thinking about your topic. When you use your "voice," you share your personality and passion with the reader. This is what makes your paper uniquely yours... your opinions, your imagination, your empathy. Think to yourself, what would it be like to be the people you are writing about. Then put those ideas into your writing in different places.

Conventions/ Grammar and Spelling: When you are done revising your paper, you will need to pay attention to grammar, especially complete sentences that don't run-on, capitalization rules, spelling, subject-verb agreement. When I read it, I don't point out every mistake I see, just a few to show you what to look for. It's your job to re-read your paper thoroughly, looking for the same mistakes made throughout the paper. It's a good idea to have several strong readers read your paper before you hand it in.

Information -- More details needed! Every generalization you make about your topic needs to be proven by research that you've done. It's not enough to say, "The Inca roads were difficult to build." Instead, explain what made them difficult to build. Describe the mountains and valleys they had to cross. Detail how they struggled to carry boulders across rivers and canyons. Describe the bridges that had to be constructed. Where did they get materials from? Your explanation of how things happened help your reader to know how remarkable the people you're describing really were.

Bibliography: You're missing a bibliography. You must create the list of sources that you used in your research. A strong bibliography has at least 6 sources listed. In the end, this is 20% of your grade. Not having the bibliography turns your "A" into a "C".

Bibliography not properly formatted: While you have included your sources, you have to work on format. The sources should be listed in alphabetical order, usually by the last name of the author. Follow the directions from the source chart exactly, including appropriate capitalization and punctuation; and leaving a space between listings. A strong research paper has at least six sources.