

# I-Search

## Who will be the next ASIJ I-Search IDOL?

*"To repeat what others have said requires education: to challenge it requires brains."*

*Mary Pettibone Poole*

The I-search paper is designed to teach you and your reader something valuable about a chosen topic and about the nature of searching and discovery. As opposed to the standard research paper in which a writer assumes a detached and objective view, the I-search paper allows you

to take an active role in your search; to hunt for facts and truths firsthand and to provide a step by step record of the discovery process. This paper is essentially a story of how and what you are finding out about your topic.

### **Educational Benefits**

While writing this paper, you will be able to practice and demonstrate aspects of each of our learning outcomes. Some specific skills include:

- Accessing, analyzing, and evaluating information through a variety of media (primary, electronic, and traditional)
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion
- Learning MLA format, one of the accepted forms of documenting research
- Establishing a coherent thesis statement
- Supporting a thesis with direct and indirect quotations, giving credit for both using proper MLA format
- Using precise language and active rather than passive voice
- Developing your natural writing voice
- Applying creativity and persistence as you define problems and develop strategies to solve them
- Working collaboratively and effectively with others



*"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind."*

*William James*

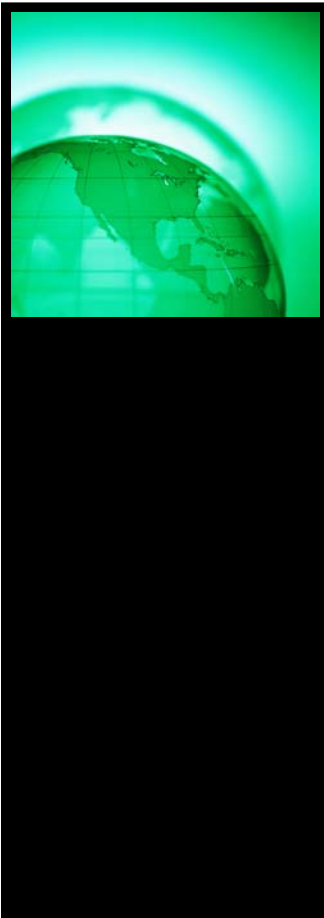
## The Topic

Forget about how long the final form will be. First, think about a subject—not any subject, but something that would reward you by investigating it. It should be of high interest to you, so pick your subject with care. See how creative you can get trying to discover new and different ways of searching out your topic.

*Remember ....Choose something, however large or small, you need to find out in your life. Choose something you want to learn more about, something important to you, and from which you will benefit by researching your topic*

## Writing Style

This assignment carries with it a natural form that should come easy to you. The assignment is a story of your search for information about something you need to know more about. You do not need to cultivate a "research paper voice." You will write this in the **first person**.



## Organization

The I-search paper is organized into four separate parts, but reads as one following narrative:

1. Why I need to write this paper.
2. What I know, assume, or have heard about my topic.
3. The story of my search and hunt for information.
4. What I discovered in the end.

### Documentation

We will be using the MLA style of documentation with a "Works Cited" page at the end of the paper... When references are made to these entries, the documentation is made in parentheses immediately after the quotation or paraphrase, e.g. (Smith, 30). This notation tells the reader that the reference came from page 30 in the source named Smith on the Works Cited sheet. The Landmark Citation machine on the web will be a great to you as you write your Works Cited.

# Details on the Format of I-Search

*"A discovery is said to be an accident meeting a prepared mind"*

*Albert Szent-Gyorgyi*

## Part 1 - Why I Need To Know

Consider what you want to know at the present time. Don't concern yourself with choosing what you think the teacher wants you to investigate. How will knowing more about your topic benefit you in your life today? Your search for an answer should make a difference to you in your life. Once you have a topic, bring it to class. Tell others how you became interested in it. Ask other students if they can help you with suggestions, expert names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.

You will write Part 1 as an anecdote or story-something to illustrate the question you are trying to answer.

## Part 2 - What I Know or Assume

*Before conducting any formal research*, write a section in which you explain to the reader what you think you know or assume about your topic. For example, if you decide to investigate teenage alcoholism, you may want to offer some ideas about the causes of teens turning to alcohol, provide an estimate of the severity of the problem, and create a portrait of the typical teen alcoholic. Tell anything and everything you know as though you were talking to your reader about this topic. Be **honest and complete** with what you know. If you don't know much, let the reader know that also.

## Part 3 - The Search

This is the actual story of the hunt for information as you test your knowledge, assumptions, or conjectures by researching your topic thoroughly. Consult books, magazines, web sites, e-mail messages, newspapers, films, tapes, and other sources of information. When possible, interview people who are authorities on, or familiar with, your topic.

**Think critically** about where the information is coming from. Is there bias? *If so*, what does this mean to your research?



"Persistence is the twin sister of excellence. One is a matter of quality; the other, a matter of time."

Marabel Morgan



### SELF-EVALUATION

On a separate page, evaluate your writing, researching, and any insights you have made about yourself.

Be sure to discuss the twelve writing and research goals listed above and how successful you were in meeting them.

### Part 4 - What I Discovered

After conducting your search, *compare* what you thought you knew or assumed with what you actually discovered. Offer some personal commentary and draw some conclusions. Then apply your conclusions to your own life. For instance, after completing your search on teenage alcoholism, you might have learned that the problem is far more severe and often begins at an earlier age than you believed. You may have assumed that parental neglect was a key factor in the incidence of teenage alcoholism, but now you might want to propose that an alcoholism awareness and prevention program, including peer counseling, be instituted in the public school system as early as the sixth grade.

## The Perfect I- Search Paper Checklist

**Part 1: The story of why you need to research this topic. (20 points)** \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

- An interesting hook
- A narrative which "shows" not "tells"
- Details are relevant to purpose
- A specific incident full of action verbs

**Part 2: What you know, assume, and need to know? (10 points)** \_\_\_\_\_

- Complete articulation of what you knew before starting research
- Detailed explanation of your assumptions and suppositions (guesses)
- Three to five specific research questions you have formulated

**Part 3: A reflection on your research process. (10 points)** \_\_\_\_\_

- Specific examples of obstacles you faced and options you explored
- At least two specific examples of how you evaluated both credibility and bias of sources
- A discussion of how you developed multiple perspectives or cross-referenced sources
- A reflection on what you learned about researching (e.g., what advice do you have for next year's I-Searchers or what did you learn about researching that you did not know before?)

**Part 4: The research and your final conclusion. (40 points)** \_\_\_\_\_ x 4 = \_\_\_\_\_

- Abundant research presented from at least 3 sources (one must be an interview)
- Paragraphs organized by research question or another organizational strategy.
- Each idea cited parenthetically.
- 85 percent score earned on Safe Assignments
- Research synthesized into a satisfying conclusion

**Part 5: Overall writing quality. (20 points)**

- Voice expresses a commitment to your topic
- Smooth transitions connect parts 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- Word choice is vivid and precise
- Sentences vary in length and structure (reads aloud well)
- Essentially error free (spelling, grammar, MLA punctuation)
- Work cited page is complete, accurate, and formatted in MLA style

