

DOING ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The important issue to keep in mind when doing research is to make it purposeful. Although a research component to the final essay in Writing 2 is mandatory, students often just do so in order to very basically satisfy the expectations for the assignment. However, real research requires us to incorporate sources into our papers in a meaningful way, not simply to check a box on a list. We should therefore try to find creative and interesting ways to incorporate research into our analytical research essays as a means of demonstrating our critical awareness of our own arguments in light of the field of discussion taking place regarding our films and to present ourselves as knowledgeable authorities on our subject matter. Here, then, are the main purposes behind doing research for an academic essay:

1. To show our sophistication and awareness of background materials in regard to our film, to demonstrate that we are worth reading because we know the field of inquiry well and have mastered the overall discourse of the film.
2. To become aware of and join an ongoing scholarly or professional conversation.
3. To provide a trail for further researchers to follow not only in terms of our own contributions but also in regard to providing a comprehensive bibliography.
4. To provide augmentation or support for our own arguments.
5. To provide a foil to argue against in order to enhance and provide credence to our own arguments.
6. To provide a reliable authority from which to borrow ideas and statements to strengthen our claims and interpretation.
7. To allow us to see our film in broader dimensions, to see it as part of a larger constellation of considerations and thinking.
8. To loosen our perspectives and prejudices about our film in order that our audience may see us as nuanced and three-dimensional in our discussions.
9. To help us become more self-critical and as a result more publishable, more worthy of attention.
10. To increase our own knowledge and capacity for thinking.
11. To helpfully complicate our writing in order to be more self-aware about our work in relation to other writers and in the process develop a “critical superego” that can both generate and anticipate counterarguments to our views that we can account for in our writing thereby strengthening our positions.
12. To help us contribute to the broader objective of developing and expanding knowledge in general