

Purpose

Conduct research to write a background paper.

Assignment Prompt

For this assignment, you will choose a geographic region to research. You will create a Background Paper to describe the political, economic, and social characteristics and challenges in your region. Background papers are frequently used in government organizations to provide important information to leaders considering legislation or visiting foreign locations. They are used by international aid organizations to report on the status of problems facing an area, and to detail possible solutions. Background papers are a type of technical writing. As a result, all information presented should be fact-based.

Assignment Instructions

Step 1: Gather materials and necessary information.

- a) Read the instructions carefully.
- b) Choose one of the following regions to research:
 - Middle East: Including countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan
 - Africa: Including countries such as the Democratic Rep. of the Congo, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Somalia
 - Latin America: Including countries such as Argentina, Venezuela, and Brazil, and Cuba
 - Asia: Focus on China
- c) Conduct research using reputable online and print sources. Suggestions include:
 - The BBC – BBC regional news pages, country profiles
 - CIA World Fact Book
 - United Nations and agency websites (ECOSOC, UNEP)
- d) Ask your teacher what word processing software you will be using to create the background paper.

Step 2: Consider the requirements of the background paper.

- a) Be sure to read the instructions carefully, and ensure each page has all required information. Feel free to include charts, graphs, or helpful images. For the data pages (pages 2-6), you may wish to present the information in bulleted form, rather than in long paragraphs. Either approach is acceptable.

Student Guide (continued)

- b) Page 1: Summary** – This section should include 2-3 paragraphs describing any important issues and trends in the region today identified during your research. You should also include a brief summary of the recent history of the region. Mention any important events that have helped to shape and influence this region today such as colonialism, war, natural disasters, ethnic conflict, or economic change. Sometimes, it is easiest to write your summary after you have completed the rest of your background paper.
- c) Page 2: Map** – Include a map of the region, with countries, capitals, and geographic features (such as oceans, rivers, mountains, deserts) clearly labeled. You can make the map yourself, or find an appropriate image online to include.
- d) Page 3: Political characteristics of the region** – This section should include the dominant type of government (such as democratic republic, authoritarian) key leaders (countries, people), important regional political organizations, character of the military and alliances, and any political challenges faced in the region.
- e) Page 4: Economic characteristics of the region** – This section should include the level of economic development found in the region (include GDP or other data), employment issues, important industries, significant natural resources, and important trading partners/relationships.
- f) Page 5: Cultural characteristics of the region** – This section should include significant population patterns or trends found in the region, religion and ethnicity, and issues related to the environment
- g) Page 6: Important issues and trends in the region** – This should include predictions for the future of the region, and the most significant challenges the region is facing, especially with regard to how they shape individual freedom and democracy.
- h) Page 7: Works Cited/Bibliography** – Include all sources used in your research, as well as for any photos or graphs you incorporated.

Step 3: Complete, Review and revise your work.

- a)** Create your background paper – be sure to follow the directions carefully. You may wish to create a rough draft before creating your final product.
- b)** Review – Carefully review the directions to ensure you have completed all requirements. Check your spelling. Review all data to make sure it is correct.
- c)** Revise – Correct mistakes and make improvements.

Student Guide (continued)

Step 4: Evaluate your background paper using the following checklist. When you can answer “yes” to all the questions, you are ready to submit your background paper.

Yes	No	Evaluation Question
		Does your background paper use visuals effectively?
		Does your background paper present information in ways that will engage your audience?
		Does your background paper use language that is appropriate to your audience and format?
		Does your background paper capture the interest of the audience?
		Does your background paper include important details, statistics, facts, and images?
		Does your background paper include all the required elements described above?

Step 5: Revise and submit your background paper.

- a) If you were unable to answer “yes” to all questions on the checklist, revise and save the background paper before submitting it.
- b) When you have completed your background paper, return to the virtual classroom and use the “Browse for file” option to locate and submit your assignment. Ask your teacher for assistance if necessary. Congratulations! You have created a notebook.
- c) Ask your teacher for further instructions about whether you will be presenting your background paper to an audience of your peers.