

Assignment #2
The High Costs of (Wal-Mart's) Low Prices

The Topic:

Everybody loves to get a bargain, and nobody wants to spend more than they have to for basic necessities like shampoo, toilet paper, batteries, and light bulbs. Many people also want the convenience of being able to purchase groceries, pet supplies, cosmetics, auto supplies, and camping equipment at a single store; this one-stop shopping can save busy families precious time. Nobody can argue that Wal-Mart doesn't provide some of the lowest prices, all under the same roof. But at what cost?

Your Task:

As Charles Fishman argues in "The Wal-Mart You Don't Know," there are hidden costs to Wal-Mart's low prices. For this assignment I want you to choose one of those hidden costs (which sometimes are not so hidden) and discuss its implications. What do you know about this particular cost, and how do you know it? In other words, I want you to draw on the various resources I have provided you, along with any additional materials you and your classmates were able to find. Note that I am not asking you a specific question for this assignment – it is up to you to decide what point you want to make. As with the previous assignment, it is important to consider the consequences of the particular issue you choose. It is also important that you consider opposing arguments. To be fully convinced by what you say, a reader will want to see that you have considered other viewpoints. What do Wal-Mart spokespeople and Wal-Mart supporters have to say?

1. Gender discrimination
2. Low wages
3. Downward pressure on wages
4. Anti-union stance
5. Effects on local businesses/competition
6. Wal-Mart's efforts to subvert local political decisions, sometimes through the ballot initiative process
7. Wal-Mart's pressuring (manipulating? bullying?) its suppliers and manufacturers
8. Costs to cities, counties, states of subsidizing low wages

Specifics of the paper:

- Your introduction should include the necessary background information about Wal-Mart, and perhaps some of the major issues surrounding the chain.
- Your thesis should clearly express your **opinion** about the cost you have chosen to focus on.

- The body of your essay should provide sufficient evidence and explanation to support your thesis.
- Body paragraphs should generally develop a single point or idea related to the thesis and should begin with topic sentences that make that point clear to your reader.
- Direct quotations should be introduced, punctuated and cited correctly.
- As with your previous paper, you will include a Works Cited list with your final draft.

Special note regarding paper headings:

The following comes directly from *Handbook of College Research*, by Robert Perrin (page 211).

A paper in MLA style has no separate title page. Instead, in the upper left-hand corner of the first page, two spaces below the header, type on separate lines your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date. Two lines below the date, center the paper's title. Capitalize all important words in the title but do not italicize it, place it in quotation marks, or follow it with a period. Two lines below the title, begin the first paragraph of the paper.

Final draft due:

Monday, March 13