

Writing Research Papers

A Complete Guide

James D. Lester



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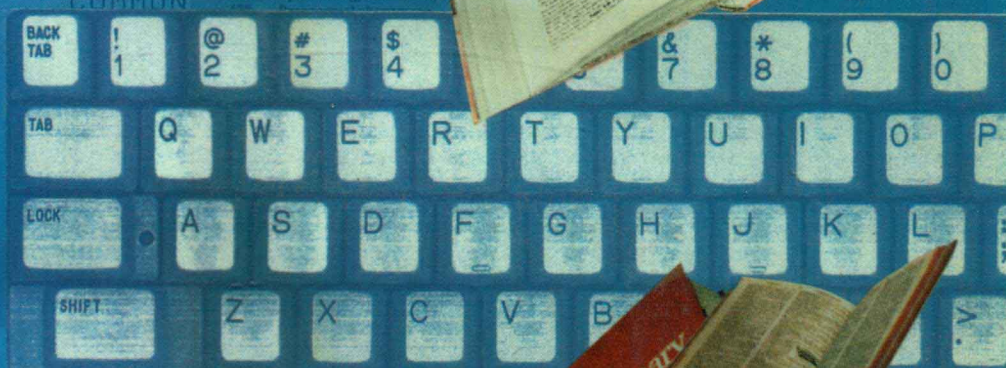


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Writing Research Papers

A Complete Guide

Sixth Edition

James D. Lester
Austin Peay State University



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Preface

Thanks to the advice of reviewers and users over the years, I have been able to anticipate and incorporate new theories of discourse into each edition of *Writing Research Papers*. Again, this new edition of *Writing Research Papers*, along with its instructor's manual, will provide you with numerous approaches, techniques, and exercises for teaching the research paper. It corresponds with contemporary classroom management.

In-Text Citations

In 1984, *Writing Research Papers* pioneered the use of in-text citations rather than footnotes or endnotes. Now, as we enter the 1990s, the convention has been adopted almost universally by instructors and students for freshman English papers. For the present, at least, documentation conventions remain stable. The Modern Language Association made no demonstrable changes in their 1988 update, and the American Psychological Association does not plan to update their 1983 edition for several more years. Therefore, in-text citation of author and page (MLA) or author, year, and page (APA) are now standard. The *Chicago Manual of Style* also recognizes the merits of the system.

Writing Across the Curriculum

Throughout the text the individual illustrations and the sample papers show ways to approach research topics in various fields of study—generating ideas for a geology paper, framing a thesis sentence for a historical study, gathering data from psychological sources, or drafting a paper on a modern drama. The text encourages students to examine subjects and sources beyond literature—in business, music, philosophy, physics, and all disciplines.

Chapter 7 is devoted entirely to documentation techniques for most academic fields other than English. It features a discussion of APA style, providing a sample research paper in APA style. The chapter also demonstrates correct documentation for many other fields—from footnotes for history to the number system for computer science. The student can match subject and field of study with the appropriate conventions, thereby learning to change the form of documentation to fit the field of study.

Sample Research Papers and Documents

The sample paper on child abuse has been replaced by one that addresses the role of television in the language development of children. It features both print and nonprint sources in MLA style. Also added is a new paper in APA style that examines with graphs and charts the role and scope of library holdings of a small university. The short literary paper with sources on Updike's short story "A & P" continues from the previous edition.

New to this edition are (1) an example of an annotated bibliography, and (2) a review of the literature on a specific subject. Retained in the instructor's manual are three additional sample research papers that you can reproduce for your students.

The Writing Process

As in the previous editions, the text follows a linear pattern: choosing a topic, doing research, taking notes, writing a draft, and typing the finished paper. In general, that's the process most students follow. Despite establishing rather tight boundaries on form and style, the text encourages students to be recursive in thinking through a problem, in researching the issues, and in writing the necessary notes and drafts. It encourages students to synthesize information with their own ideas and, in so doing, learn that writing has practical value for exploring an issue or problem. They will learn to base their judgments on a blend of evidence, not on the words of one authority or on their personal opinions.

Perhaps no two aspects of the research project baffle students more than choosing a topic and formulating an effective thesis sentence. Prewriting activities receive detailed explanation to help students discover topics with which they have a connection and, thus, a commitment. This edition also expands the discussion of both the preliminary thesis sentence—which guides their library work and rough draft—and the final thesis sentence—which controls the flow of the final paper and keeps the reader on track.

Chapter 3, Taking Notes, helps students discover a distinctive voice, purpose, and audience so that ideas can be summarized, paraphrased, and quoted for a purpose. The text encourages students to write personal note cards to express their opinions on a topic so that writing becomes one element of discovery. It suggests that they condense some sources with précis notes, yet encourages them to record information from other sources with paraphrased notes. Throughout, the text emphasizes a blending of the writer's thoughts with those of source materials so students can accomplish some of their writing in the note-taking stage.

Writing Research Papers does not abandon the student during the writing phase. It provides numerous guidelines for developing an introductory section, for building the body of the paper, and for ending with a real conclusion rather than mere summary or restatement. It presents in-text citation of sources as a natural, on-going process during note-taking and writing.

The text explains and distinguishes the roles of revising a draft on a global basis, editing before the typing of the final manuscript, and proof-reading the finished paper. In short, the text moves with the student from discovery of a topic to generating ideas and from note-taking to the writing and rewriting stages. After the student has conquered the major problems of building a substantial paper, Chapters 5 and 6 explain and illustrate the mechanical formats of the typed manuscript and the formal Works Cited page.

Writing Research Papers by Word Processor

This sixth edition provides specific guidance to those students who now write with word processors. The storage and retrieval capacities of the computer change the way writers work. Thus, *Writing Research Papers* explains techniques for entering notes and text, maintaining files, writing, merging, and revising the drafts, and printing the finished work.

Library Sources on Computer

This sixth edition expands its explanation of computer facilities and data base resources. It shows students how to gain access to a card catalog stored in a library's computer. It explains how to use a computer search system such as *InfoTrac* to the best advantage. It gives step-by-step instructions on retrieval of bibliographies from national data base sources. And it provides an exhaustive list of national data base sources by discipline.

The List of Reference Sources

The appendix, which lists reference works by discipline, directs students to four fundamental sources: general guides to research in the discipline, bibliographies, data bases, and indexes to journals. This arrangement enables students to dip first into encyclopedias, dictionaries, and general information books for their preliminary reading and then go to the bibliographies and indexes for source materials in specific fields (e.g., it directs a writer on an economics topic to *The Wall Street Journal Index*, among others, but it sends a political science student to *P.A.I.S.*). At those colleges where undergraduate students have access to data base sources, the appendix lists a few major ones for each discipline (e.g., BIOSIS PREVIEWS for biology or ENVIRONMENTAL for ecology).

The Instructor's Manual

An instructor's manual in 8½ by 11 format provides several types of support. It offers a set of in-class exercises for each chapter. It provides other exercises that you can photocopy and distribute to your students for independent work on special problems. You may also make transparencies for overhead projectors if you so desire. It also furnishes review exercises and posttests for every chapter. Also included in the instructor's manual are three additional sample papers, one on "Creative Marriages" in MLA style; one on "Creative Marriages" in APA style with an abstract and with a body adjusted to scientific reporting of introduction, method, results, and discussion; and a third paper on Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* that uses the MLA footnote system for instructors who still prefer that convention of documentation.

A Note on Research Manuals

The main body of the text, Chapters 1 through 6, conforms to standards approved by the Modern Language Association in their official text:

The MLA Style Manual. Ed. Walter W. Achtert and Joseph Gibaldi. New York: The Modern Language Association, 1985.

The style manual is supplemented by the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 1988. MLA advocates in-text citation of source materials with no documentation footnotes and with a "Works Cited" list of sources. This format conforms to standards in most other fields. Some historians and

fine arts scholars still use the footnote style, but many instructors in those fields have now adopted the standards presented in *Writing Research Papers*.

Chapter 7 of the text explores several options in documentation style by describing the Name and Year System, the Number System, and the Footnote System. It explains the stipulations of several official style guides. The most widely used are:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: APA, 1983.

This manual sets the standards for the popular APA style, used in the social sciences.

CBE Style Manual. 4th ed. Washington, DC: American Institute of Biological Sciences, 1983.

This manual sets standards for scientific papers.

A Manual of Style. 13th ed. revised. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

This manual sets standards for the traditional footnote style.

Chapter 7 also provides explanation of several other documentation methods so that students can write papers that conform to the official styles described in the *Handbook for Authors* for chemistry, *Style Manual* for physics, *A Manual for Authors of Mathematical Papers*, *Suggestions to Authors of the Reports of the United States Geological Survey*, and other specialized publications.

Acknowledgments

We celebrate the 23rd anniversary of *Writing Research Papers* with this edition. Well over two million students have used the text since its publication in 1967. Hundreds of students, faculty, and editorial professionals have contributed to its success. Dick Welna and Verne Reaves of Scott, Foresman helped to launch the project years ago. Today editors Hope Rajala, Constance Rajala, and Kathy Crabtree keep the tradition of excellence alive and well. My family, Martha, Jim, and Mark, have supported the project with unending enthusiasm and encouragement. Jim, now an English teacher in his own right, has actively participated by writing and proofreading various portions of the manuscript.

Several students deserve special mention for their writing of the sample research papers: Patricia Bracy, Kim Wells, Pamela Howell, Glenda Durdin, Jon Ezell, Jo Walker, and Tommy Burchett. I want to thank other students from different parts of the country who have sent me valuable tips and suggestions.

At Motlow State Community College, Linda C. Rollins and the English staff provided valuable tips on revision of both the text and teacher's manual. Faculty members at Austin Peay State University have contributed significantly to the text. Special recognition goes to librarian Anne Berwind of Austin Peay State University who, with the help of student Robin Slack, revised the appendix's list of reference sources.

Introduction

Rationale for Research Writing

As you begin this important task of writing a research paper, you may feel overwhelmed about defending a thesis and conforming to all sorts of documentation rules! This writing manual will help you with its step-by-step explanation of the research-writing process—from selecting a significant topic all the way down to typing the final draft.

Keep in mind that the process of creating a long, scholarly paper is sometimes neat and logical and sometimes chaotic and disorganized. In general, it is best to follow the order of this text—choose a topic, gather data, plan and write a draft, revise and polish the manuscript, and develop a final bibliography. However, in actual practice you must disrupt this order at times to work backwards and forwards in starts and stops. You can stay on track by using this text, which provides helpful guidelines, formulas, and examples.

If you approach the research paper assignment one step at a time, you will develop confidence as you complete each stage. Confidence, in turn, lets you write essays that do more than merely repeat lecture notes or duplicate paragraphs from books and articles. You will discover your own ideas and generate new ones. You will be prepared to defend your position with the weight of your arguments and the strength of your evidence.

You will become adept at the following:

1. Narrowing the focus of an issue until it becomes a manageable topic—one that addresses the problem for your special audience,
2. Locating source materials and taking notes,
3. Analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting materials,
4. Arranging and classifying materials,
5. Writing the paper with a sense of purpose as well as with clarity and accuracy, and
6. Handling problems of quoting and properly documenting your sources according to MLA (Modern Language Association) style.

This text will carry you through all these stages beginning with the first step in Chapter 1—finding a suitable topic that has merit as a scholarly issue or research question. Take your time selecting a topic. A poor one will cause untold anguish for weeks and weeks, while a good one will pave the way to significant research and quality writing.

Chapters 2 and 3 carry you into library research and the writing of note cards. Included is a section about plagiarism, which is not a disease but a curse that afflicts many students who think proper scholarly credit is unnecessary, or who become confused about proper placement of references.

Chapter 4 will help you write the paper: step by step—from title and outline to introduction, body, and conclusion. It will train you to handle quoted and paraphrased materials so that you can distinguish your own comments from those drawn from the source materials. *Writing Research Papers* will also provide guidelines and examples on revising, editing, and proofreading. It even includes a section on adapting your writing to the demands and the rewards of word processing.

Matters of format and mechanics appear in Chapter 5, along with answers and models for all your questions—from design of the title page to the minor issues of entering dates, underlining titles, and numbering the pages.

Chapter 6 introduces you to the format of bibliography entries for the *Works Cited* page. It explains the form of individual entries so that you can fully document the sources used in writing your paper.

Chapter 7 introduces the APA (American Psychological Association) style along with styles for other disciplines. The chapter correlates the similarities of the MLA style with that used in other disciplines such as psychology, biology, or geology. Your training in the MLA style of this text is not dissimilar to the APA style or the CBE (Council of Biological Editors) style.

Finally, the appendix contains an exhaustive subject list to reference works and journals in many fields of study. For every discipline listed it suggests useful study guides, the best data bases, printed bibliographies, and indexes to literature in the journals. Consult it as you begin research in a particular discipline, be it psychology, home economics, or drama.

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