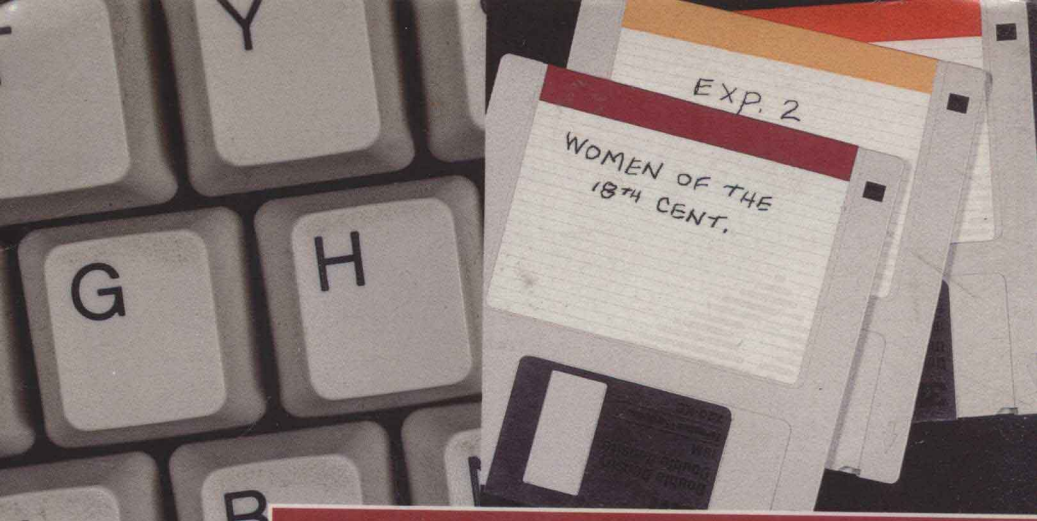
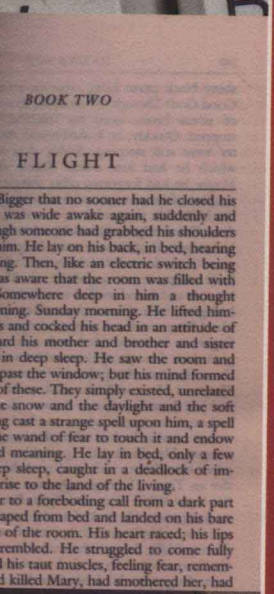


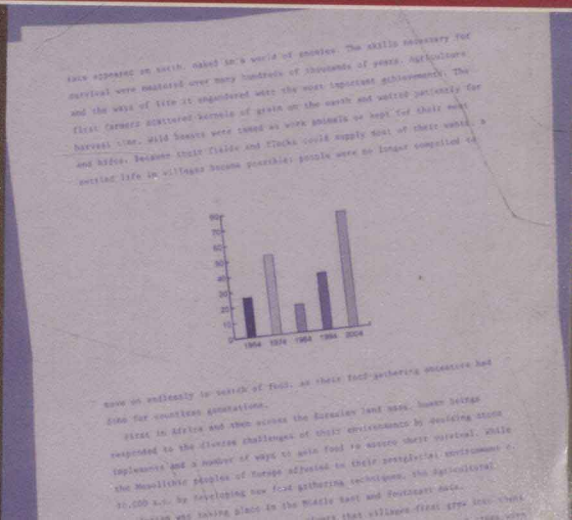


JAMES D. LESTER

WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS

A Complete Guide

Eighth Edition



Writing Research Papers

A Complete Guide

Eighth Edition

James D. Lester
Austin Peay State University

HarperCollins*CollegePublishers*

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Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide, Eighth Edition

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Preface

Several factors have influenced the development of the eighth edition of *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. In particular, I have adjusted the recommendations on form and style to meet the demands of three newly revised style guides, one by the Modern Language Association, one by the American Psychological Association, and one by the Council of Biology Editors. In addition, I have changed the text's prevailing assumptions about the work habits of students who write research papers in this age of the computer.

New Standards for the MLA Style

The Modern Language Association has published the fourth edition (1995) of its *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers,* edited by Joseph Gibaldi. Because we have always conformed to the guidelines set forth by the Modern Language Association, an update to the new standards has been necessary. First, the new MLA handbook has added extensively to the rules for citing electronic sources. The difficulty in this area, of course, is that electronic sources do not remain stable. Thus a source cited by a student on one day may be altered within days or weeks. Nevertheless, we can only cite the source used and note the electronic address where the document might be available—with no guarantees to future researchers. Perhaps a minimal standard in the future will be the dating of electronic documents so that the same document, though altered in some fashion, will appear in two or three forms.

Second, although the basic works cited form for books, journal articles, and magazine articles remains unchanged, the new MLA style has altered the form of most other bibliographic citations in many subtle ways. Finally, in another major change, MLA style now requires single spacing after periods throughout research papers.

New Standards for the APA Style

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* has also appeared in a new fourth edition (1994) and its new rules are adopted here. The new APA style presents a different sort of challenge because it advocates two types of manuscripts. One is a "copy or working draft" manuscript written by professionals that will eventually become a typeset article. The other is a "final" manuscript

written by authors of student papers, theses, and dissertations. To distinguish between the two, examples of both forms are given in Chapter 10, and the copy or working draft form is provided in the sample APA paper. In order to avoid confusion, instructors should specify what sort of manuscript is expected: either the copy draft or the final polished manuscript.

New Standards for the CBE Style

The Council of Biology Editors has issued a new edition (1994) of its style manual, *Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers*. This guide advocates two citation and reference styles:

1. The name and year system for general biological studies (see "Using the Name and Year System for Papers in the Biological and Earth Sciences," 338–44).
2. The number system for biomedical papers (see "Using the Number System for Papers in the Medical Sciences," 351–52, especially the list of references on 356–57).

A New Emphasis on Researching and Writing with Computers

Throughout this edition, you will see a stronger emphasis on both the student's use of electronic sources and the use of the computer to write the research paper. In past editions, my assumption has been that most students write bibliography cards, develop handwritten notes, and then type the paper. Today, with the arrival of the Information Superhighway, most students now access Infotrac, the Internet, or SilverPlatter, use the computerized Public Access Catalog, and then keyboard on a computer their bibliography list, their notes, and the various drafts of the paper. Although I have not abandoned the traditional methods, I have addressed the new technical methods for researching and writing first in each case.

As a result, almost every chapter presents the electronic method first and the traditional method second.

Plagiarism

The text devotes a full section in Chapter 5 to the problems of plagiarism. This section of the book has been reproduced in other publications because of its insightful help to the student. It explains the role of the researcher, who must cite sources honestly and accurately in order to share with the reader the fundamental scholarship of a narrow topic. Rather than taking a negative approach and merely warning students against plagiarism, the text encourages critical thinking so that students learn to assimilate ideas in their notes and to incorporate them in the manuscript in a clear, well-documented progression. It displays methods for achieving correct citations, it explains the rules, and it condemns blatant disregard for scholarly conventions. The text also explains the gray area of "common knowledge" facts.

Sample Papers

The text includes many sample papers so that students can see how to write and format their own manuscripts:

- Research proposals
- An annotated bibliography
- A review of the literature on a topic
- Abstracts in MLA and APA style

- A short essay with documentation of a few sources
- Two research papers in MLA style
- A research paper in APA style
- A research paper in the number style
- A portion of a paper in footnote style

Additional sample papers appear in the Instructor's Manual.

Collecting Data Outside the Library

Many instructors now require students to search for material outside the library. Therefore, the text features a comprehensive section on citing and documenting information from various types of sources: interviews, letters, questionnaires, local government documents, television programs, and original tests and experiments.

Supplements

The author has written an extensive *Instructor's Manual* which includes chapter-by-chapter ideas for classroom activities in addition to some forty worksheets which can be copied and used in your classroom. The Manual also includes four easily reproduced sample research papers in each of the most common styles (MLA, APA, Number, and Chicago.)

Acknowledgments

Students by the millions and instructors by the thousands have used this text in its previous seven editions. Many students and faculty members have made contributions to the quality of the book. For that I am grateful. In particular, I need to thank Patti Bracy, Marcia Thompson, Stefan Hall, and Jay Wickham for their contributions of sample research papers.

Special thanks goes to Anne May Berwind, head of Library Information Services at Austin Peay State University. She revised the list of references in the appendix and added a few annotations for selected works on the list.

Professional reviewers for the eighth edition offered many helpful ideas; they include the following: Peggy Brent, Hinds Community College; Lynn Bryce, Saint Cloud State University; Sister Elizabeth Bryson, Salve Regina University; Judith L. Burken, Kellogg Community College; Adele M. Carpenter, Lewis and Clark Community College; Mary A. Fortner, Lincoln Land Community College; Margaret Gwathmey, Skyline College; Kim Brian Lovejoy, Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis; Faye J. Maclaga, Wilson Technical Community College; Alice Maclin, Dekalb College; Elizabeth R. Nelson, St. Peter's College; Grace Powell, Wenatchee Valley College; Kathleen G. Rousseau, West Virginia University; Michael W. Shurgot, South Puget Sound Community College; James Stokes, University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point; Judith Barton Williamson, Sauk Valley Community College; and Roger V. Zimmerman, Lewis and Clark Community College.

I appreciate also the support of my family, and so I thank Martha, Jim, Mark, Debbie, Caleb, and Sarah for their unending enthusiasm and encouragement.

James D. Lester

Contents

Introduction

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH WRITING

This writing manual provides a step-by-step explanation of the process of research writing. It will encourage you to approach the assignment one step at a time—from selecting a significant and appropriate topic to producing a polished manuscript. You will develop confidence as you complete each stage of the process and begin the next one. You will become adept at several skills:

1. Narrowing your focus to a manageable topic
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
6. Handling problems of quoting and properly documenting your sources

In time, you will come to understand that knowledge is not always something conveyed by experts in books and articles for you to copy onto the pages of your research papers. You must also generate new ideas about the issues related to your topic and defend your position with the weight of your argument as well as the strength of your evidence. You will want to cite certain sources because they support *your* ideas, not merely because they relate to your subject.

The creation of a long, scholarly paper seldom develops in a neat, logical progression. The work, spread over several weeks, often demands that you work both forward and backward in various starts and stops. One way to succeed is 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. Word processing makes each of these tasks easier, and this manual explains computer technology as appropriate to the task.

Chapter 1 will help you find a topic that has merit as a scholarly issue or research question. The chapter shows how to search library sources for a topic, and it helps you to:

Examine your own experience.
Reconsider your cultural background.
Evaluate issues within your favorite academic disciplines.

Chapter 2, "Gathering Data," offers you three distinct sources of research: (1) the electronic library; (2) the printed resources; and (3) information found outside the library, such as interviews, letters, lectures, or questionnaires. The arrival of the information highway has required libraries to speed up their chase along such networks as Internet and others. Therefore, a major portion of Chapter 2 serves as a nonprofessional's introduction to researching by computer.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will help you organize a plan, practice critical reading, and write notes. Included is a discussion of how to avoid *plagiarism,* an error of scholarship that afflicts many students who think proper scholarly credit is unnecessary or who become confused about proper placement of references.

Chapters 6 and 7 provide details about writing the paper—from title and outline to introduction, body, and conclusion. In particular, Chapter 6 will help you frame the thesis in the introduction, develop it in the body, and discuss it in the conclusion. You will also be reminded of three vital phases—revising, editing, and proofreading. Chapter 6 also includes a section on adapting your writing to the demands and the rewards of word processing. Chapter 7 explains the value of in-text citations to help you distinguish your own comments from paraphrases and quotations borrowed from the source materials.

Chapter 8 explains matters of formatting and mechanics. It shows you how to design the paper, from the title page to the Works Cited page and from underlining to proper numbering. Sample papers in MLA (Modern Language Association) style are provided on pages 240–63.

Chapter 9 explains how to write the individual bibliographic entries so that you can fully document all your sources on the Works Cited page.

Chapter 10 explains APA (American Psychological Association) style and correlates its features with MLA style. You will need to use APA style for papers in several disciplines outside the English class, such as psychology, education, political science, and sociology.

Chapter 11 explains the documentation style for disciplines other than English and psychology. It explains in detail how to document with the *name-and-year system* for papers in the social sciences, business, and the physical or biological sciences. It explains the *number system* for use with

papers in the applied sciences and medical sciences. It explains the *footnote* and *endnote* systems for use with some papers in the liberal arts. Writing samples of each of these systems are provided in Chapter 11.

Finally, the Appendix contains a thorough list of reference works and journals shown alphabetically by field of study. For every discipline included, a list of study guides, the important databases, the appropriate printed bibliographies, and the most useful indexes to literature in the journals are provided. Consult it as you begin research in a specific discipline, such as drama, home economics, geology, or women's studies.

1 *Finding a Topic*

Choosing a topic for a research paper can be easy (any topic will serve) yet very complicated (an informed choice is crucial). Select a person, a person's work, or a specific thing to study—for example, President Bill Clinton, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men,* or Nintendo games. Select from any area that interests you:

Current events (handguns in schools)
Education (electronic classrooms)
Social issues (the high cost of health-care services)
Science (poisonous drugs from the monkshood, or aconite, flower)

Whatever the topic, the subject for a research paper must meet three demands:

1. It must have a serious purpose, one that demands analysis of the issues, argues from a position, and explains complex details.
2. It must address the academic community, both your follow students and the faculty.
3. The thesis (or hypothesis) must be one that you can prove within the confines of the paper.

> ***Note:*** **Choose a topic with a built-in issue so that you can interpret the issue and cite the opinions of outside sources.**

You need not abandon a favorite topic, such as fishing at Lake Cumberland. Just be certain to give it a serious, scholarly perspective. For example:

```
The Effects of Toxic Chemicals on the Fish in Lake
Cumberland
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Instead of a paper entitled, "The Cartoon Strip *Calvin and Hobbes*," a better topic would be:

The Role of Fantasy in Calvin and Hobbes

or

Gender Issues in Calvin and Hobbes

The next topic suggests a built-in issue:

The Addiction of Some People to Video Games

Two questions arise from this last topic: Do certain children and adults get addicted to video games? If so, what are the results?

Another controversial issue is whether talk shows are objective in their presentation of news and other factual data. An appropriate title for a paper on this topic might be:

Television Talk Shows and Objectivity

When your topic addresses a problem or raises an issue, you have a reason to:

Examine specific sources in the library.
Share your point of view with the reader.
Write a meaningful conclusion.

Start by personally reflecting on your interests (see Section 1a, which follows). If that doesn't produce a good topic, use a computer search at the library (see Section 1b). If computers are unavailable, use the library's printed sources to search out a topic (see Section 1c).

1a GENERATING IDEAS FOR A RESEARCH PAPER

Three techniques will help you with topic selection before you enter the library:

1. Reflect on your personal experiences to find a topic that touches your lifestyle or career ambitions.
2. Talk with other people because collaborative learning can broaden your vision of the issues.
3. Speculate about the subject, and discover ideas by listing issues, asking questions, engaging in freewriting, and utilizing other techniques.

These three steps will not only help you find a primary topic but also help you produce a secondary list of issues, terms, questions, and a few written notes.

Using Personal Experience for Topic Discovery

Most people have special interests as demonstrated by their selections for television viewing, their choice of magazines, and their clubs and activities. One of these three techniques can serve you in selecting a topic:

1. Combine a personal topic with some aspect of your academic studies. For example:
   a. A personal interest in skiing combined with an academic study of sports medicine might yield a topic entitled "Therapy for Torn Ligaments."
   b. An interest in children combined with a study of childhood psychology might lead to a topic entitled "Children Know More Than We Think."
   c. Concern about your personal checkbook combined with a study of government economic policies might generate a paper entitled "Deficit Spending: The Ultimate Payment."
   d. The contaminated well water on your family's farm combined with a study of chemical toxins might yield a topic entitled "The Poisoning of Underground Water Tables."
2. Use your career interests to narrow a general subject to a specific topic. For instance, assume that three writers all select the same general subject—latchkey children:
   a. Student 1, who plans a career in law enforcement, focuses on the criminal dangers for latchkey children, who must return from school to empty houses and apartments.
   b. Student 2, who plans a career in communication, investigates television programming during after-school hours for the lonely child.
   c. Student 3, who is majoring in economics, conducts a cost-benefit analysis of different child-care options for school children.

The three writers have a personal stake in the issues addressed, and each may arrive at different conclusions about the general topic of latchkey children.

3. Let your cultural background prompt you toward detailed research into your roots, your culture, and the mythology and history of your ethnic background. For example, four students might develop these topics:
   a. The Indian Wars from the Native American's point of view
   b. Chinese theories on the roles of women
   c. Bicultural experiences of Hispanic students
   d. Pride as a motivator for the behavior of young Afro-Americans

Caution: Do not become too emotional about your personal response to your heritage; research writing must maintain its objectivity.

Talking with Others to Find a Subject

As some researchers do, you may need to start your research sitting on a park bench with a friend or across the coffee table from a colleague or relative. Ask people in your school and community for ideas and topics that need investigation, and allow them to respond to your questions. Listen to what they say.

Interviews

One writer wanted to write a paper that argued for more liberal arts courses in high-school curriculums. Before spending hours reading sources, however, she talked by phone with her former high school teachers. She discovered that a liberal arts curriculum was in place; the problem was something different—how to motivate students toward liberal arts courses in a marketplace that demands utilitarian skills, such as typing, auto mechanics, and computer programming. In the end, the writer developed a different sort of paper, all because she took time to consult with others.

Collaborative Learning

Listen to the advice of your peers in group learning sessions.

1. Consult with three or four students about your topic.
2. Listen to the concerns of others.
3. Take careful notes.
4. Adjust your research accordingly.

Your peers may suggest additional explanations and definitions, or they may argue for stronger, more detailed arguments.

Speculating About Your Subject to Discover Ideas

At some point you may need to sit back, relax, and use your imagination to contemplate the issues. Out of meditation may come topics and subtopics worthy of investigation. Ideas can be generated in these ways:

Keeping a Research Journal

Unlike a diary of personal thoughts about your daily activities or a journal of creative ideas (poems, stories, or scenarios), the research journal is a collection of ideas and materials on specific issues. You can maintain the journal on your computer or in a notebook. In it should be listed issues, questions, notes, bits of freewriting (see the following paragraph), and photocopied materials. In effect, you can keep all your initial ideas and materials in one notebook rather than on cards or individual sheets. If you buy a notebook that has pockets on the inside covers, you will have a