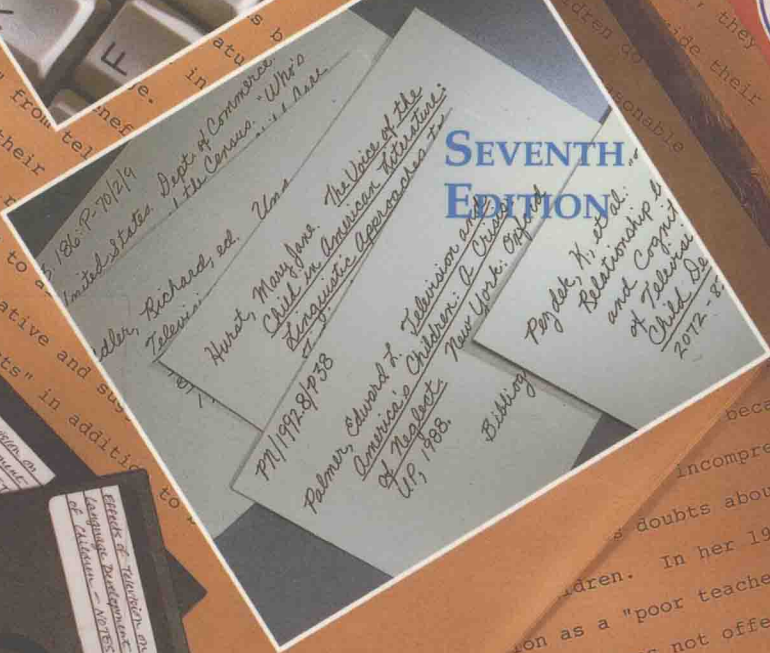
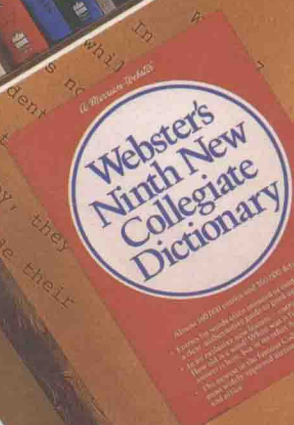
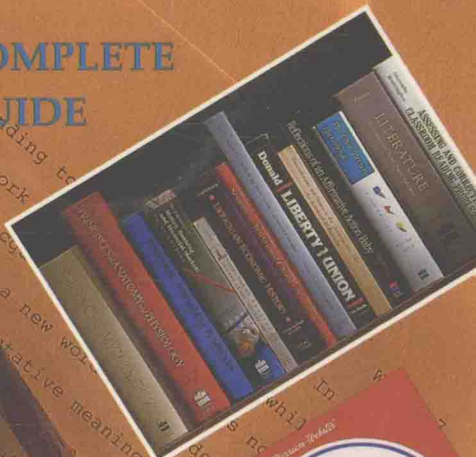


# WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS

## A COMPLETE GUIDE

JAMES D.  
LESTER



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# *Writing Research Papers*

*A Complete Guide*

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**Seventh Edition**

**James D. Lester**

*Austin Peay State University*

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# Preface

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We celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide* with this seventh edition. During these years, documentation has changed from footnotes to in-text citations, and the content of research papers has shifted from a topic on literature to a topic from across the curriculum. Through the years, I have revised the text to keep students up to date. I've continued that tradition in the seventh edition, which brings improvements in several areas. The first you may notice is the addition of colored tabs and section numbers to make the text easier to use.

**Electronic Sources** The nature of research has changed rapidly in recent years, and *Writing Research Papers* has kept the pace by providing information on the public access catalog (PAC), national data-bases, locally loaded compact discs (CD-ROM), and computer mail in programs such as BITNET. The text explains how to use electronic sources and also how to cite information gathered from them, both in the text and in the bibliography.

**Computer-generated Papers** This new edition provides specific guidance to the many students who now write with word processors. The storage and retrieval capacities of the computer have changed 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.

**Writing Across the Curriculum** Throughout, the text makes reference to topics from many disciplines, and the topics for the sample papers show the same wide-ranging point of view. A new chapter (Chapter 10) on APA style gives a comprehensive explanation to a documentation format that has gained universal application for research papers in several academic fields, not just psychology. The chapter shows students how to

design the sources to APA style, both in the text and in the bibliography entries. The chapter also provides a sample paper in APA style.

Chapter 11 explains documentation for other disciplines across the curriculum, specifying both the style for in-text citations and also the form required for bibliography entries. Samples demonstrate the “number” style for the applied sciences and the “footnote” style for certain courses in the fine arts and the humanities (other than language and literature).

In addition, students in cross-curriculum programs will benefit by using the appendix, “List of Reference Sources by Discipline,” which provides a list of the best reference sources for each major discipline. It lists reference guides, bibliographies, data-bases, and journals. The critically important sources for each discipline are marked with asterisks and explained with annotations.

***Drafting a Research Proposal*** The research proposal is a preliminary exercise for launching the project. A new section in Chapter 1 discusses the role and scope of the writer, the writer’s sense of an audience, the paper’s purpose, and the preliminary thesis sentence. It provides several examples. Many instructors require an acceptable research proposal before students may begin serious note-taking because it helps young researchers to stay focused on essential matters.

***Selection, Evaluation, and Critical Reading of the Sources*** A new Chapter 4 gives detailed attention to the methods for finding the best sources and responding to them with a critical eye. It cuts to the heart of the matter: How can I find the best sources? Should I read all or just part of a source? How do I respond to it? The chapter will help students use journal articles and scholarly books rather than copy indiscriminately from magazines, trade books, and encyclopedias. Chapter 4 also features two sample papers: an annotated bibliography and a review of the literature on a topic.

***Plagiarism*** The text devotes a full section in Chapter 5 to explain the role of a researcher, who must cite sources honestly and accurately in order to share with the reader the fundamental scholarship of a narrowed topic. Rather than merely warn students against plagiarism in a negative sense, the text encourages critical thinking so that students learn to assimilate ideas in their notes and to incorporate them in the manuscript in 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
- 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 beyond the library, so the text features a comprehensive section on citing from and documenting information from these types of sources: interviews, letters, questionnaires, local government documents, television programs, and original tests and experiments.

**The Writing Process** The writing process serves as the structuring feature of the text, carrying students from discovery of a topic to research, note-taking, writing, and formatting the finished manuscript to a specific style. The text moves systematically from one stage to the next, and a new arrangement of eleven chapters, instead of seven, clearly defines the process in its logical sequence and focuses precisely on specific tasks.

Chapter 1 now features methods for developing a research proposal. Chapter 2 highlights electronic sources as well as traditional printed materials. Chapter 3 is now a separate section on setting goals and organizing the material. Chapter 4 adds new material on critical reading so that students might select the best sources and make intelligent responses. Chapter 5 focuses on note-card design, including computer-generated notes. Chapter 6, on writing the manuscript, has an expanded section on techniques for building the body of the paper and continues to provide plenty of methods for developing a full introduction and an effective closing.

Chapter 7 gathers in one place the rules and methods for blending reference material into one's writing. Chapter 8 is a nuts and bolts chapter on format and mechanics, and it includes two sample papers—the short essay that uses sources and the long, formal research paper. Chapter 9 provides specific rules for the Works Cited page in MLA style. Chapter 10 shows APA style, which has gained universal application in the social sciences. Chapter 11 provides rules for citations and documentation in other fields across the curriculum to show several styles: the name and year system for business and the natural sciences, the number system for the

applied sciences, and the traditional footnote system for some humanities courses.

***Acknowledgments*** Almost three million students have used this text since its publication 25 years ago. Hundreds of them, along with faculty and editorial professionals, have contributed to the book's success. Several students deserve special mention: Patricia Bracy, Kim Wells, Pamela Howell, Glenda Durdin, Jo Walker, and Jay Wickham. Anne May Berwind, Head of Library Information Services at Austin Peay State University, revised the list of references in the appendix and also annotated selected works on the list.

Professional reviewers for the seventh edition offered many helpful ideas; they were Lynda G. Adamson, Prince George's Community College; Karen D. Bowser, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg; Lynn Bryce, Saint Cloud State University; Donella Eberle, Mesa Community College; Karen W. Gainey, University of Tulsa; Margaret Gwathmey, Skyline College; Kathy Howlett, Northeastern University; Kim Brian Lovejoy, Indiana University, Indianapolis; Elizabeth Nelson, St. Peter's College; Eugene L. Shiro, University of the District of Columbia; Michael W. Shurgot, South Puget Sound Community College; Hassell B. Sledd, Slippery Rock University; James D. Stokes, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point; John D. Wills, Luzerne County Community College; Matthew Wilson, Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg.

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

*James D. Lester*

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# *Introduction*

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## **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 by providing a step-by-step explanation of the research-writing process. It will encourage you to approach the assignment one step at a time—from selecting a significant 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 to novice writers who merely copy the ideas of the experts onto the pages of their research papers. In truth, you will want to generate new ideas about the issues and defend your position with the weight of your argument, as well as with the strength of your evidence. You will want to cite the sources that support *your* ideas, not cite the sources just because they relate to your subject.

Creating a long, scholarly paper is seldom a neat, logical progression. The task, 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. It also helps you examine your own experience, reconsider your cultural background, and evaluate issues within your favorite academic disciplines.

Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 carry you into the library for critical reading, research, and the writing of note cards. Included is a discussion of plagiarism, which 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 argument 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 format and mechanics. It discusses matters of style and design, from title page to works cited page and from underlining to abbreviations. Sample papers in the Modern Language Association (MLA) style are provided on pages 231–49.

Chapter 9 explains the necessary ingredients of individual bibliography entries so that you can fully document all of your sources on the works cited page.

Chapter 10 explains the American Psychological Association (APA) style and correlates its features with the MLA style. You will need to use the 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 those for English and the social sciences. It explains in detail how to document with the *name and year system* for papers in 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. Samples of writing using each of these systems are provided in Chapter 11.

Finally, the appendix contains an exhaustive subject list to reference works and journals in many fields of study. For every discipline listed, it provides a list of study guides, the important data-bases, the appropriate printed bibliographies, and the most useful indexes to literature in the journals. Consult it as you begin research in a specific discipline, such as drama, home economics, geology, or women's studies.

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