

# Writing Research Papers: A Step-by-Step Procedure

## The Preliminaries

- \_\_\_ 1. Choose a topic
- \_\_\_ 2. Begin preliminary reading
- \_\_\_ 3. Restrict the subject
- \_\_\_ 4. Develop a preliminary thesis statement

## Gathering Data

- \_\_\_ 1. Compile the working bibliography
- \_\_\_ 2. Prepare the bibliography on cards in correct form (3" x 5" cards)
- \_\_\_ 3. Begin extensive work in the library reference room; be sure to check:
  - \_\_\_ a. general bibliographies
  - \_\_\_ b. trade bibliographies
  - \_\_\_ c. indexes (books and collections, literature in periodicals, newspaper indexes, pamphlet indexes)
- \_\_\_ d. library electronic catalogue

## Taking Notes

- \_\_\_ 1. Develop a preliminary outline
- \_\_\_ 2. Evaluate your source material; which is primary material and which is secondary material?
- \_\_\_ 3. Begin note-taking on cards (4" x 6" cards)
- \_\_\_ 4. Avoid plagiarism

## Writing the Paper

- \_\_\_ 1. Develop the final outline; test your outline
- \_\_\_ 2. Prepare to write:
  - \_\_\_ a. put your note cards in the order that your outline is in
  - \_\_\_ b. consider your (real and imagined) readers and how their expectations may affect your tone and style
- \_\_\_ 3. Write the rough draft
- \_\_\_ 4. Check your documentation carefully
- \_\_\_ 5. Revise and rewrite
- \_\_\_ 6. Check the format of the text, citations, notes, and bibliography (most instructors recommend MLA at CHS)
- \_\_\_ 7. Proofread

Most of this format is based on the process described by James D. Lester in *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*, 2nd ed. (1971; rpt. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1976).