

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO GET AN 'A' ON MY PAPER?:
PAPER WRITING TIPS AND AN ILLUSTRATION OF TURABIAN FORMATTING

BY

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101.00 INTRODUCTION TO PAPER WRITING AND TURABIAN FORMATTING
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Precision . . . is to editors what the Holy Grail was to Arthur's knights. . . . As most scholars have discovered, trying to maintain consistency in matters of style can be frustrating at best. Often it appears that there are as many ways to do something as there are scholars.¹

This short paper discusses a few of the mechanics involved in academic writing and illustrates a variety of formatting instructions found in Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.² It is not exhaustive but it should provide students with information about the most common documenting scenarios. This paper also involves interpretations of, and some modifications to *A Manual for Writers*. It is a supplement to the style guide itself, not a replacement.

I have written this model paper for students in my Providence College classes and I invite them to send me any recommendations, corrections, or requests for information they might have. Proper documentation is difficult but important. It is not only a safeguard against plagiarism, making sure that sources are properly acknowledged, it is also a way of ensuring the presentation of your research is uniform and attractive. Attention to detail always catches a grader's eye! Writing academic research papers is hard but rewarding work. I hope these pages provide some assistance to make the process a little easier for you.

¹Patrick H. Alexander, et al., ed., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), xiii.

²Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed., rev. John Grossman and Alice Bennett (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Writing a Research Paper: Some Preliminary Thoughts

Incredible but true, writing research papers can be an enjoyable part of the university experience. When trying to convince her readers of this, Kathleen T.

McWhorter includes the following observations:

Term papers allow you to distinguish yourself – to demonstrate your diligence, hard work, thinking and organization skills, creativity, and talent. . . . Term papers provide the opportunity to look ahead in an academic discipline, to go beyond the basics and explore advanced study in the field.³

Some students are not so certain about the claimed benefits of writing assignments. They are difficult and involve too much work. Therefore, in the following pages I attempt to demonstrate that the process is not as arduous as often thought. I provide some strategies for writing successful research projects.

As a starting point, flip through this paper. This is what a paper written in Turabian format should look like (except better written and more interesting!). Notice that the type is 12-point, Times New Roman, that it is double-spaced with one-inch margins all around, and includes a title page and bibliography. The format of this title page is acceptable for all Providence College courses. Note also that each page and footnote has a number.

Now that you have an idea of what a Turabian-style research paper looks like, we will move into a more detailed discussion of the paper writing process and Turabian formatting. In what follows, the bold, italicized comments in square brackets offer commentary, calling attention to specific aspects of the paper. ***[these opening***

³Kathleen T. McWhorter, *Study and Critical Thinking Skills in College*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2000), 387. ***[notice that book titles are italicized. Underlining is also acceptable]***

paragraphs represent an introduction. Notice that the objectives of the paper are stated and there is some indication of how I will attempt to achieve this]

Here is an assignment taken from an introductory course in New Testament literature:⁴ “Discuss the original, authorial intent of any New Testament document. Represent differing scholarly views, identifying strengths and weaknesses.” How would we go about writing a successful paper for this course?⁵ Here are five key steps that will help.

First, the most important step is choosing an appropriate topic. This might sound obvious but often times there is too little forward planning here. When instructors permit a choice of subject matter for a paper, students are responsible “to find a workable topic that fulfills the requirements of the assignment and that adopts a serious, scholarly perspective.”⁶ This choice can make all the difference between viewing the assignment as a chore or an adventure in learning. For our sample paper, *I would like to have a look at one of the shortest writings in the New Testament, a letter titled 3 John. How should you proceed when it comes time to make a decision on your subject?*

⁴Papers for courses in the humanities, like biblical studies, history, literature, and philosophy, sometimes require Turabian formatting, whereas the social sciences (such as sociology and psychology) use APA (American Psychological Association), and applied sciences (such as chemistry and physics) use CBE (Council of Biology Editors). *[by the way, this is a content footnote; in addition to providing information about the sources you are using, as in notes 1, 2, and 3, footnotes are used to supply additional information not directly related to the argument (though usually providing further support for it)]*

⁵Oops, this is first person (“we”), which generally is not used, in formal writing. What this means is that you need to rework phrases like “I think” or “We can see” or “My conclusion” and the like. For example, use less precise language like “It would appear” or “this suggests the following conclusion.” I will use first person (I, we, my, our, etc.) in this paper to facilitate communication that is more direct and, more importantly, because no one is grading it! You will find that your instructors have different expectations on this point so it is best to check with them ahead of time.

⁶James D. Lester and James D. Lester, Jr. *The Essential Guide: Research Writing Across the Disciplines*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 2002), 1.

To begin with, choose something that interests you and something you know little about. This is a good idea because you will invest several hours in any quality paper and you may grow weary of the topic over time. Are there subjects that are relevant to other areas of your life? For example, a cross-disciplinary research project might provide you an opportunity to bring different interests together. Let's *[the word "Let's" is a contraction for "Let us"; contractions are not to be used in formal writing]* say the paper I am writing on 3 John is for an elective course in a religious studies department and my major is sociology. Perhaps there is a way I could combine these interests, such as a paper involving a sociological analysis of the New Testament world?⁷ Or, why not tackle an issue that you yourself are wrestling with or is particularly germane to your own situation? Be creative.

Okay *[this is a colloquialism; do not use such casual language in formal writing]*, I have picked a subject area (3 John) but I am not quite ready to sit down at the computer and begin typing just yet. What I need to do next is formulate a specific topic within my subject area. I have decided to work with 3 John because it is not very familiar to me and there is plenty of academic literature that treats it (cf. point 1 above *[cf. represents the Latin term confer, meaning compare]*). However, what specifically do I want to study? I need to formulate a question to address or an issue to summarize. How?

⁷Modern scholars are applying various methodologies to the biblical text with impressive results. On the social sciences, see e.g., Stephen C. Barton, "Historical Criticism and Social-Scientific Perspectives in New Testament Study," in *Hearing the New Testament*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, Ill.: Eerdmans, 1995), 61-89; John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); Bruce J. Malina, "The Received View and What I Cannot Do: III John and Hospitality," *Semeia* 35 (1986): 171-94; and Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Social Description of Early Christianity," *RelSRev* 1 (1975): 9-25. *[notice that there are differences in how you document articles in books (the first example), books (the second example), and journal articles (the third and fourth examples); the same is true in a bibliography (see below); "RelSRev" in the last note is the acceptable abbreviation for the journal Religious Studies Review; if you do not know the proper abbreviation, spell titles out in full]*

Consider reading over introductory material on your chosen subject (your textbook is a good place to start – you spent a lot of money on it so you may as well use it!). Luke Timothy Johnson, author of my textbook for this class, tells me that 3 John is a letter of recommendation.⁸ Hmmm [*an onomatopoeia – never use these in formal writing*], I am not sure what this means so I am going to look into it. My thesis statement/question will be “Is 3 John a letter of recommendation and if so, what does it tell us about factions in the Johannine community?” I will state this in my opening paragraph.

Keep your topic as narrow as possible. Attempting to answer a question like “How is 3 John significant for understanding the history of Christianity?” would be far too broad in scope. What we have settled on for a thesis statement is much more manageable given the limited space available in a research paper.

Third, once you have selected the topic, it is time to begin the research. I suggest you look in the following places. To begin with, go to the reference section of the library and look up encyclopedia and dictionary articles on your subject area (3 John), or introductory textbooks. These provide ‘the big picture,’ an overview of the subject area.⁹ Next, and only after starting with material providing a general overview of the subject area, head toward the book stacks. My dictionary article (see n.9) helped clarify the subject and topic (tensions among John’s readers; 3 John as a letter of recommendation). Having got the issue clear in my head, I can now go to the detailed studies found in books

⁸Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 563.

⁹Our sample subject is 3 John. In looking for encyclopedia/dictionary articles, I came across a helpful introduction to my subject (Gary M. Burge, “John, Letters of,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids [Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1997], 587-99) that also includes further bibliography. Burge discusses scholarly questions related to the academic study of 3 John, including the matter of its function (my topic).

with more confidence. After this, you need to track down peer-reviewed journal articles. By this point, you have seen bibliographies in dictionary and encyclopedia entries and books. Be sure to use the library's databases (available from the Providence Library website) to assist with your search. For biblical studies topics, ATLASerials (American Theological Libraries Association Serials) is invaluable.¹⁰ You will also find many full-text electronic resources in these databases.

Books and papers cover my desk. I have a subject (3 John) and a specific question to address (Why was a letter of recommendation needed? What was the problem in John's churches?). There is also a deadline looming. Now I am ready for step four.

Before you start writing, I suggest thinking out what your paper will look like in overview. The following elements should be included. (a) In your opening sentences, provide a clear introductory statement/thesis question. What exactly do you hope to do and how will you go about doing it? *[see the example in the opening lines of p.2 in this paper]* (b) Your argument and the evidence used to answer the thesis question should be well organized. (c) There should be a conclusion to your paper that explicitly refers back to your introductory/thesis statement. Conclusions may be tentative (e.g.,¹¹ "The last option considered is plausible though there is insufficient evidence to prove it").

Step five requires consideration of the most annoying part of the paper-writing process, formatting. It is one thing to have ideas, knowledge, and insight but it is also important to be able to communicate them appropriately. Specifically, you need to write

¹⁰Specialized indices that represent other academic disciplines are also available in these databases. I have deliberately omitted web-based research at this point because developing library skills is a priority for many undergraduate courses. Quality control is a concern when using the Internet so I prefer that students not use of the web for research papers.

¹¹"E.g." is an abbreviation for the Latin phrase *exempli gratia*, meaning for example. Only use it in notes and place a comma after it.

your paper according to Turabian guidelines.¹² The use of style guides in academic courses is commonplace and has been for a long time; Kate Turabian first published this book in 1937 to assist students in their use of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Why do we need style guides at all? Here are some general reasons why this is necessary from my perspective as a grader. First, it makes everyone's paper look the same. When this is the case, my grading is (I hope) more objective – I am focusing on content, not creative documentation. Second, it covers you legally by ensuring you have given all necessary information about the sources used in your work. Third, it provides a guaranteed way for students to earn marks. Students earn marks for proper attention to writing requirements regardless of the content (ask your instructor about their grading breakdown). This should encourage those students who are less confident about writing papers – anyone can take a little time to learn the basics of Turabian so there are no excuses for losing marks in this area.¹³

I hope this overview is of some value to you. My plan was to provide basic strategies for writing papers and to model some things instructors in your humanities courses are looking for. ***[notice how the summary statement recalls the introduction to the paper]*** Keep in mind that not all professors have the same expectations so be sure to check with them about their requirements. It is not an oxymoron to speak of an enjoyable

¹²Copies of Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, are available in the library's reference section. You will also find numerous helpful websites if you do a search for "Turabian formatting."

¹³Requiring attention to formatting/style guides is not unique to Providence College. You will also discover there are numerous different systems in use, even in our small school (e.g., Chicago, MLA [Modern Language Association], APA, SBL [Society of Biblical Studies], and so on). This is unavoidable so just grin and bear it. If it is any consolation, just remember that your professors, who write papers for academic journals, have to learn these systems as well.

research-paper assignment. Writing a good ('A') paper is never an easy thing but it can be a rewarding experience. I look forward to reading yours!

Illustrations of Turabian Documentation and Other Tips¹⁴

The next part of this paper provides illustrations of Turabian documentation. Turabian does include instructions about in-text citations but I do not treat these here (see *A Manual for Writers*, chap. 10). Be sure to ask your instructor which system s/he prefers.

1. Documenting Electronic Sources (Internet, databases)

The current edition of Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* (6th ed.) does not provide detailed information about documenting electronic material. Presumably, the next edition will do so. In the meantime, numerous websites provide suggestions on how to do this for *Chicago Manual/Turabian* papers but there is no consensus. The following will serve as a guideline for my courses until the seventh edition of *A Manual for Writers* arrives. What follows is a list of examples that should cover the majority of sources you will encounter in your research. I have adapted the *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines provided in Lester, Lester, and Mochnacz¹⁵ and the Bedford St. Martin's website (*Online! A Reference Guide to Using Internet Sources*) (<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/cite7.html>). In the following pages, [FN] = footnote; [SN] = short note; [B] = bibliography.

¹⁴For information about section and subsection headings, see *Turabian* 1.37-38.

¹⁵James D. Lester, James D. Lester, Jr., and Patricia I. Mochnacz, *The Essential Guide to Writing Research Papers*, Canadian edition (Toronto: Longman, 2003), 151-53. They point out that "CMS does not supply a great deal of information on citing electronic sources" (151).

Articles Taken from an Electronic Database

[FN]

5. Henry Schellenberg, "Toward a Basic Understanding of Worship," *Didaskalia* 15.2 (Winter 2004): 21. ATLASerials Database, EBSCOhost (19 March 2005).

[SN]

7. Schellenberg, "Worship," 30.

[B]

Schellenberg, Henry. "Toward a Basic Understanding of Worship." *Didaskalia* 15.2 (Winter 2004): 17-34. ATLASerials Database, EBSCOhost (19 March 2005).

[the date found at the end of FN and B refers to the date I accessed the article]

[FN]

3. Lissa M. Wray Beal, "Blessings Lost: Intertextual Inversions in Hosea," *Didaskalia* 16.2 (2005): 25. ATLASerials Database, EBSCOhost (22 August 2006).

[SN]

15. Wray Beal, "Intertextual Inversions," 22.

[B]

Wray Beal, Lissa M. "Blessings Lost: Intertextual Inversions in Hosea." *Didaskalia* 16.2 (2005): 17-39. ATLASerials Database, EBSCOhost (22 August 2006).

On-line Journals

[FN]

3. Esther A. de Boer, "Mary Magdalene and the Disciple Jesus Loved," *lectio difficilior* 1 (2000), <http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/00_1/m-forum.htm> (28 September 2004).

[SN]

56. de Boer, "Mary Magdalene."

[B]

de Boer, Esther A. "Mary Magdalene and the Disciple Jesus Loved." *lectio difficilior* 1 (2000). <http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/00_1/m-forum.htm> (28 September 2004). ***[this is a web-based journal in html format; there are no page or paragraph numbers; you do not need to manufacture numbers for citations]***

[FN]

12. Nancy Calvert-Koyzis, "Re-sexualizing the Magdalene: Dan Brown's Misuse of Early Christian Documents in *The Da Vinci Code*," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 12 (Spring 2006): par.10, <<http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art12-resex.html>> (3 July 2006). ***[this journal has paragraph numbers in articles; they should be included in citations; use the abbreviation "par." followed by the number]***

[SN]

14. Calvert-Koyzis, "Magdalene," par.23.

[B]

Calvert-Koyzis, Nancy. "Re-sexualizing the Magdalene: Dan Brown's Misuse of Early Christian Documents in *The Da Vinci Code*." *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 12 (Spring 2006). <<http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art12-resex.html>> (3 July 2006). ***[though this on-line journal numbers the paragraphs in articles, these numbers are not included in the bibliography]***

[FN]

44. Wendy B. Faris, "The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism," *Janus Head* 5.2 (2002): 118, <<http://www.janushead.org/5-2/index.cfm>> (1 June 2005).

[SN]

51. Faris, "Cultural Critiques," 102.

[B]

Faris, Wendy B. "The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism." *Janus Head* 5.2 (2002): 101-19. <<http://www.janushead.org/5-2/index.cfm>> (1 June 2005). *[this is a web-based journal with articles in PDF format; provide page numbers for all citations]*

[FN]

2. Michael J. Gilmour, "An Outsider's Notes on the Jehovah's Witnesses' *Revelation: Its Grand Climax at Hand!*," *Journal of Religion and Society* 8 (2006): par.14, <<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2006/2006-12.html>> (30 September 2006).

[SN]

10. Gilmour, "Outsider's Notes," par. 19.

[B]

Gilmour, Michael J. "An Outsider's Notes on the Jehovah's Witnesses' *Revelation: Its Grand Climax at Hand!*," *Journal of Religion and Society* 8 (2006). <<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2006/2006-12.html>> (30 September 2006).

2. Documenting Print Material

Books

Holmes, Christopher. *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Wolf Krötke*. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.

Konkel, August H. *1 & 2 Kings*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006. **[this book is part of a series; the title is italicized but the series name is not]**

McNeill, John William. *Western Saints in Holy Russia*. Pasadena, CA : Mandate Press, 2002.

Perry, Tim. *Mary for Evangelicals: Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Wray Beal, Lissa M. *The Deuteronomist's Prophet: Narrative Control of Approval and Disapproval in the Story of Jehu (2 Kings 9 and 10)*. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Series. New York: T & T Clark (forthcoming).

Journal Articles in Print Format

Bammeke, A. A. [Yinka]. "Perspective-Centre Position Determination in the Rational (4-D) Space." *Nigerian Journal of Engineering* 5.1 (1988): 71-79.

Hiebert, Dennis W. "Toward a Post-Postmodern Christian Concept of Self." *Didaskalia* 16.1 (Fall 2004): 1-24. ATLASerials Database, EBSCOhost (22 August 2005). **[many articles are available in print and electronic format, as this one is]**

Mandryk, Kara. "The Convergence Movement in Contemporary Worship." *Didaskalia* 17.2 (2006): 19-36.

Marchand, Chris. "Secondary Traumatic Stress: Recognizing the Unique Risks for Youth Ministry." *Journal of Youth Ministry* 4.1 (Fall 2005): 9-22.

Schludermann, E., S. Schludermann, D. Needham, and M. Mulenga. "Fear of Rejection Versus Religious Commitment as Predictors of Adjustment among Reformed and Evangelical Colleges Students in Canada." *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 22.1 (2001): 209-24.

Book Chapters/Articles in Edited Volumes

Holm, Randall. “‘Pulling Back the Darkness’: Starbound with Jon Anderson.” In *Call Me the Seeker: Listening to Religion in Popular Music*, ed. Michael J. Gilmour. 158-71. New York: Continuum, 2005.

McKenzie, Cameron S. “Inner-biblical Exegesis, Hebrew Bible.” In *The Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John H. Hayes. 538-40. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

Perry, Tim. “All Too Human: Magneto and Original Sin.” In *The Gospel According to Superheroes*, ed. B. J. Oropeza. 171-87. New York and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005.

3. Some Basic Writing Tips

Learning to write well is a lifelong process. Here are a few recommendations and things to watch for when you are proofreading your papers.

- use the grammar-check tool in your word processor
- avoid the passive voice
- unless told otherwise, avoid use of the first person (I, me, we, our, my, etc.); though pure objectivity is not possible, this does create some sense of distance between the writer and the subject matter (cf. n.5)
- avoid wordiness, or use of big words in excess; it sounds pretentious; impress graders with your good ideas, not your thesaurus
- be very careful with spelling, especially names; be sure to set your word processor’s spell-check feature to Canadian English
- use gender inclusive language (people, not men; humankind, not mankind; etc.)
- avoid clichés and colloquialisms
- avoid absolutes and exaggeration; rather than phrases like “All scholars agree . . .” or “Most scholars agree . . .” use “Many scholars agree . . .”
- be respectful in your writing, even with authors and ideas you disagree with

4) Additional Resources to Help You Write an “A” Paper

Still cannot find what you are looking for? You will find many websites that help with academic writing. I recommend sticking with university and college library websites. The Berkeley Library site is particularly helpful for *Chicago Manual/Turabian* (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Chicago-Turabianstyle.pdf#search=%22turabian%20formatting%20berkeley%22>). In addition to

Internet sites, numerous books provide instructions about writing. Here is a very small sample:

Aaron, Jane, E., and Elaine Bandor. *The Little Brown Essential Handbook for Writers*. Toronto: Longman, 2005.

Buckley, Joanne. *Fit to Print: The Canadian Student's Guide to Essay Writing*. 6th edition. Toronto: Thompson Nelson, 2004.

Lester, James D., James D. Lester, Jr., and Patricia I. Mochnac. *The Essential Guide to Writing Research Papers*. Canadian edition. Toronto: Longman, 2003.

Rosa, Alfred, and Paul Eschholz. *The Writer's Brief Handbook*. Toronto: Longman, 2005.

Schubert Walker, Lilly J., and Dieter Jürgen Schönwetter. *Success Secrets of University Students*. Toronto: Pearson (Prentice Hall), 2003. See especially chap. 8.

Troyka, Lynn Q. *Quick Access: Reference for Writers*. 2nd Canadian ed. Toronto: Pearson (Prentice Hall), 2004.

WORKS CITED

[for pages with titles, place the page number on the bottom; otherwise, on top centre or top right; switching from a header to a footer is difficult in Microsoft Word so you may want to place your WORKS CITED page in a separate file and insert a footer]

Alexander, Patrick H., et al., ed. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999.

Barton, Stephen C. "Historical Criticism and Social-Scientific Perspectives in New Testament Study." In *Hearing the New Testament*, ed. Joel B. Green, 61-89. Grand Rapids, Ill.: Eerdmans, 1995.

Burge, Gary M. "John, Letters of." In *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, 587-99. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Elliott, John H. *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. Rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.

Lester, James D. and James D. Lester, Jr. *The Essential Guide: Research Writing Across the Disciplines*. 2d ed. New York: Longman, 2002.

Malina, Bruce J. "The Received View and What I Cannot Do: III John and Hospitality." *Semeia* 35 (1986): 171-94.

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Study and Critical Thinking Skills in College*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2000.

Smith, Jonathan Z. "The Social Description of Early Christianity." *RelSRev* 1 (1975): 9-25.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Rev. John Grossman and Alice Bennett. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.