

# Theological Research and Writing

Methods and Models



SAINT MARY SEMINARY  
AND GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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## THE EXEGETICAL PAPER

### A. Definition:

Etymologically, exegesis derives from the Greek meaning “to guide out of” and hence denotes “a critical explanation, or interpretation, especially of Scripture.” In biblical studies, insofar as no text is ever **per se** fully self-explanatory, understanding is often dependent upon one’s ability to get at its whole frame of reference.

The essential task of exegesis is to grapple with all the dimensions of a text which relate to its “message”: its central point(s), its key characteristics, its placement, form and function, its authorship and date, its unmistakable implications, its intended and unintentional pattern of communication, its style and tone, its life setting.

### B. Procedure:

#### 1. General Comments:

- a There is **no universally recognized standard format** for writing an exegesis paper. Each pericope (or biblical passage) presents a distinct set of issues. Each exegete brings a distinct set of concerns or assumptions to an identical pericope. Each audience evokes a distinct clarification of purpose. Even the same pericope allows the same exegete a variety of approaches and methodologies.
- b Although choosing of a pericope is a relatively easy, much more complex and critical is the **specific focus** (achieved by articulating a sub-title) which will determine the explicit development or thrust of the paper.

#### 2. The Use of the Outline

- a. Ordinarily a student should follow carefully the suggested outline given below. The topical headings and sub-sets under Section A and D are **normative**. That is to say, unless compelling reasons dictate otherwise, these headings and sub-units should neither be omitted nor transposed in the writing of an exegesis paper.
- b. The topical headings and the sub-sets under Section B are **in most cases essential** to the effective development of an exegesis paper. As important as these headings are in themselves, however, every one of them may not be applicable in every paper, nor is it absolutely necessary to follow slavishly the sequence in which these headings are presented here.
- c. The topical headings and sub-sets under Section C are **optional**. That is to say, the writer has the option of including or dropping such materials. (Some professors, however, get great store by this section. In fact, the homiletic task takes its basic focus from this Section.)

- d. Section A (especially #1 and 2) are best written last, namely, after all the research has been completed and the actual writing of the paper finally begins.
- e. The outline below presupposes the use of the standard exegetical tools: viz., dictionaries, word analyses, concordances, translations, synopses, and commentaries.

### 3. The Model Outline

#### SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. State of the Question
  - a. Summarize (selected) scholarship to date
  - b. Evaluate the major positions which emerge
2. Statement of Purpose
  - a. State the thesis (basic stance or position) of paper
  - b. Articulate what the paper hopes to accomplish
3. Statement of Methodology and Significance
  - a. Outline the basic methodology to be used
  - b. Explain the value or importance of the undertaking

#### SECTION B: BODY OF PAPER

4. Text
  - a. Determine the reliability (or condition) of the text:
    - i. Summarize the manuscript tradition (list variants)
    - ii. Check out the versions (=early translations)
    - iii. Review the translations
  - b. “Frame” (i.e., establish the limits of) the passage
    - i. Determine where to start the analysis and where to end
    - ii. Give rationale (state reason why)
5. Translation
  - a. Provide a tentative translation, or at least choose what is generally regarded as a workable translation
  - b. Annotate problem area(s)
  - c. Justify, as best you can, the working translation
6. Socio-historical background
  - a. Research carefully the sociological/historical/theological/cultural/geographical background of the passage
  - b. Summarize the key points in the foreground (“direct intentionalities”) of the passage
  - c. Date the passage
7. Literary Content
  - a. Explore the literary function (What does the passage “say”?)

- b. Explore the placement (What meaning can be argued from its positioning in the disclosure?)
  - c. Take note of significant details
  - d. Analyze the author (or editor)
8. Literary Form (or Genre Analysis)
- a. Determine the general literary form (e.g., poetry or prose; law or narratives; epistle or gospel)
  - b. Determine the specific literary form (e.g., psalm of personal lament or collective lament)
  - c. Annotate any anomalies in the typical form
  - d. Identify what scholars say about life-setting (**Sitz im Leben**)
  - e. Provide a rationale, if necessary, for the form
9. Rhetorical Design (Structure)
- a. Scrutinize the passage from the perspective of pattern or design, e.g., series of rhetorical questions, impassioned discourse, transmitted logion, parable, oracle)
  - b. Study the interrelation of each and all units (e.g., parallelism, inclusion, contrasts, climactic build-up)
  - c. Differentiate primary (=direct) statement vs. oblique (=sub-ordinated) statement
  - d. Chart poetic structure (or sentence flow)
10. Thematic Analysis
- a. Identify recurring motif or theme (e.g., “end of earth” in II Isaiah)
  - b. Determine the significance of this fact
11. Redactional or Tradition-Historical Analysis
- a. Compare passage with postulated sources (e.g., Luke and Matthew over against Mark)
  - b. Assess “statement” vis-à-vis standard tradition
  - c. Apply “vertical reading” (See: 10a, 13b, 14)
12. Grammatical/Syntactical elements
- a. Examine relevant issues
  - b. Examine linguistic factors (e.g., spelling, word-forms, coinage)
13. Lexical Information
- a. Focus on idiosyncrasies of vocabulary in book (e.g., only time this word occurs in the Bible, NT, Paul)
  - b. Isolate key words.
    - i. Incidence or frequency of occurrence
    - ii. A phrase favored by the author
  - c. Do word studies
  - d. Explain semantic peculiarities
14. Biblical Setting
- a. Research use of term/phrase in other biblical books
  - b. Determine connotation elsewhere (Commentaries and dictionaries are usually helpful)
  - c. Take note of the varying meanings at different periods
15. Theological Investigation

- a. Analyze the passage theologically
  - b. Annotate related issues
  - c. Determine the theological significance
16. Secondary Literature
- a. Check out what other scholars have said (See #1a, 19)
  - b. Critique
17. Conclusions and Results
- a. Upshot of investigation
  - b. Summarize discoveries

#### SECTION C: APPLICATION

18. Epilogue
- a. List key issues in the pericope
  - b. Sketch the homiletic applicability to specific audiences

#### SECTION D: WORKS CONSULTED

19. Bibliography
- a. Keep record of works consulted
  - b. Decide whether to use straightforward alphabetized bibliography or arranged in a classified bibliography

## THE REFLECTION PAPER

### A. Definition:

A reflection paper is a focused, substantial and creative “conversation” with some element of the content of the course. Its purpose is to present the writer’s own thought and imagination in dialogue with course material. Usually briefer than a research paper, it is the “next step” beyond the course lectures and reading assignments in which the student thoughtfully engages the material.

### B. Procedure:

#### 1. Finding a Focus

- a. If the professor has not assigned a specific focus to the reflection paper (e.g., compare the viewpoints of two authors), the writer will need first to narrow the broader or open-ended area assigned for reflection.
- b. This narrowing can be done by brainstorming about the area assigned. For example:
  - i. assigned topic: the scrutinizes of the RCIA
  - ii. possible focuses: the pastoral pluses and minuses of the term “scrutiny,” the theological foundation of the scrutinies, preparation of catechumens for the scrutinies, the role of the community in the celebration of the scrutinies etc.

#### 2. Developing a Substantial Conversation

- a. A reflection paper is NOT the presentation of random thoughts plucked out of thin air, nor is it simply the representation of course readings or lectures, nor is it a chance to climb onto a soapbox or to editorialize.
- b. The reflection will have as its point of departure the pertinent material from the course readings and/or classroom discussions; for example:
  - i. A reflection on “the theological foundation of the scrutinies” will need the introductory material on this subject found in the RCIA and/or the texts of the rites themselves as dialogue partners;
  - ii. A reflection on “the pastoral pluses and minuses of the term “scrutiny” will need to work with the history and meaning of the term before developing the reflection paper.
- c. The specific development is left to the writer, but he or she should critically expand the topic, perhaps by raising questions or making clarifications or opening new directions for discussing the topic or whatever is appropriate.
  - i. The path of the development is the point of the reflection paper: What do you want to say about this topic, and how do you want to say it? The writer may want to jot

some notes or make an outline in order to focus and develop his/develop his/her thoughts

- ii. Also the conclusion of the reflection should indicate how the discussion will be left for now: issues still to deal with, questions that remain, pastoral directions to be taken, and so on.
- d. Footnotes are not required in a reflection paper, but any material referred to or quoted directly ought to be referenced briefly in the text of the paper itself, for example, RCIA #141-246).

### 3. Being Creative

- a. Certainly any writer's reflection is going to be original in its insight and expression, but creativity of approach or manner of presentation is encouraged; for example:
  - i. A theological foundation of the scrutinies may be presented as a series of parish bulletin inserts, or
  - ii. The role of the community in the scrutinies might be presented as what is going on in the mind of one of the parishioners as she is present for the second scrutiny, for example, or
  - iii. The comparison of two authors might be presented as a dialogue between them or a talk-show interview.
- 4. The evaluation of the reflection paper is based not on some predetermined approach the writer "should have taken" (unless of course there are blatant errors), but on the quality and substantiality of the "conversation" the writer has undertaken.

## A CASE STUDY

A case study may be defined as a detailed analysis of, and mutual reflection on, a particular pastoral event involving you as minister/counselor and your interaction with a person or group. A case study is usually done for the purpose of presentation in a class or group. The case study serves as a learning experience for the entire class or group as well as the presenter.

In writing up a case study it is essential that the information be presented in a manner in which the presented person's identity be protected. This may mean altering a few facts as to make the person or group unrecognizable. Real names should never be used. Any written information given out to the class or group should be marked **CONFIDENTIAL** and should be collected by the presenter at the end of the discussion. **Before** any case is presented, the class or group should discuss concerns and guidelines about trust and confidentiality.

Each individual professor may have specific guidelines to follow. For instance, the guidelines used for "ministering in Crisis Intervention" would involve identifying the precipitating and hazardous event, and describing the crisis as situational, developmental, or social/cultural. These particular identifications would not be necessary for "Bio-medical Ethics." Therefore, you will need to check with your professor for specific guidelines.

The following outline is a general outline that may be adapted for particular courses.

### 1. Describe the Event

- (a) background information on the person and event  
summarize any information that is relevant to the understanding of the case  
person: age, gender, family background  
event: context, intent, goals

- (b) background information on your role and involvement  
describe your role and involvement in relation to the event and person

*\* Do not get bogged down in description. This section is meant to serve as a background from which to reflect in a person's situation and your interaction in a particular pastoral event.*

### 2. Analyze the Event

- (a) objectively  
identify the issues and concerns that emerged from the event  
what went on?

*\* Depending on the type of event, particular guidelines might be appropriate here. Check with professor.*

- (b) subjectively  
describe what was going on in you as you ministered to/counseled the person  
identify significant feelings and personal concerns

### 3. Evaluate the Event

(a) objectively

Evaluate how session went. Did you help? Were you effective? Why or why not? What could you have done differently?

**Identify particular questions/concerns that you would like to have the class/group help you with.**

(b) subjectively

Look at how your own feelings and concerns affected your effectiveness as a helper.

#### 4. **Theological Reflection**

Identify biblical or theological themes that emerge from this event. Mention particular religious resources that inform your reflection. Where specifically was God's action present for you? Identify any ethical issues that emerged.

#### **Some final comments:**

There is a difference of opinion in the field whether or not case studies should be presented or read out loud. If they are to be read out loud, the written length should be limited to two pages. If they are to be presented, the written length can be 4-5 pages.

There are two possibilities for facilitating the discussion: the student himself or herself may facilitate the discussion of the case, or the professor may serve as facilitator.

The case study is as much about you as it is the person and event presented. This should be evident in the way you present the case and in the type of information given and questions asked.

Try to choose a recent case, ideally within the last 6 months to one year. Be sure to indicate why you have chosen this particular case.

As with the verbatim, you will not be graded on how good a minister/helper you are, but on how well you are able to analyze and reflect on a case. Were you able to go beyond a description of the case to an analysis? Were you able to identify significant issues? Did you take a good honest look at yourself and were you able to listen to feedback from the class/group? Was your case a good model for the class as well as a good learning experience for you?

If the case is brief and the professor serves as facilitator, the case may be expanded after the class discussion and submitted to the professor for feedback and grading.

## **CASE STUDY OUTLINE**

### **1. Describe the Event**

- (a) background information on the person and event  
person: age, gender, family background  
event: context, intent, goals
- (b) background information on your role and involvement  
identity and interaction

### **2. Analyze the event**

- (a) objectively  
issues and concerns
- (b) subjectively  
significant feelings and personal concerns

### **3. Evaluate the Event**

- (a) objectively  
effectiveness, skills
- (b) subjectively  
feelings and concerns in relation to effectiveness

### **4. Theological Reflection.**

Biblical and theological themes, religious resources, God's action, ethical issues.

## A VERBATIM

The verbatim consists of two sections: the verbatim report and the verbatim analysis.

### REPORT

“Verbatim” literally means “word for word”. To give a “verbatim report” of an encounter means to report the encounter “word for word” as it happened. This can be done in two ways:

1. Ask permission to tape record your encounter and then transcribe (part of) the encounter from the tape.
2. Write up the encounter as best as you can remember it.

If you **tape record the encounter**, do so only with the **explicit permission** of the person you are talking with/counseling. Explain that you wish to tape record the session in order that you may learn to be a better listener/counselor and that your professor will be reading a portion of your transcribed tape. You should make it clear that you, the listener, and your professor will keep what is said in confidence. (Note exceptions in the case of abuse, potential suicide, potential harm to another person.) If the person is not comfortable with this arrangement, you should honor this by not tape recording.

If you cannot tape record the session, or if you prefer to relate the encounter from memory, you should write it up as you remember it. In order to do this, you may want to make extensive notes immediately following the session. Do **not** take notes **during** the session.

### How much do I report?

If you have a 10-minute encounter with someone, you should report it all, whether taping or reporting from memory. If your session is 30-50 minutes and you are taping, choose a 15-minute segment of the tape and report only that segment. Try to choose a part of the session that was particularly difficult for you and that you want feedback on. If you have a 30-50 minute session and you are reporting from memory, report the whole session. This **verbatim report** section should be 5-8 pages in length.

## Writing the Verbatim

### Verbatim Report

In this first part of the verbatim, you are transcribing or writing word for word as you remember, the **text** of your encounter. This should be written as a conversation and should be lettered and numbered as follows:

C=Counselor

P=Person

C1 is used to indicate the first time you as counselor speak.

P1 is used to indicate the first time the person speaks

C2 indicates the second time you as counselor speak.

P2 indicates the second time the person speaks.

## **Sample:**

C1 Hi, Bob! Come on in and sit down.

P1 Hi, Mary. Thanks!

C2 The last time we met you talked about a number of issues. Is there any particular issue on your mind today?

P2 Actually, Mary, there is. (Pause) (Silence of about ten seconds. Bob is looking at his hands.)

P3 It's a little hard for me to get started. I'm feeling rather afraid to tell you.

C3 That's OK, Bob. Take your time. I appreciate your honesty in telling me how difficult this is for you.

The numbering may not be uniform, as one person may speak twice before the other person speaks: P2, P3. Try to number the interactions as carefully as possible. This number is important for your analysis.

It may be helpful to also report significant nonverbal behavior (see P2 above). Do not interpret the behavior in this section.

Leave a one-inch margin down the right hand side of the sheet for comments from the professor.

## **Verbatim Analysis**

### **Preliminary Fact Sheet: Optional**

After you have written the verbatim report section, you will begin the **analysis** section of the paper. The first part of the analysis may consist of a preliminary fact sheet and will address such information as: facts of general interest, person's initial concern, counselor's initial response, and noted of other people. If you choose not to include a preliminary fact sheet, you will proceed on to section one:

#### **The Introduction.**

### **Verbatim Analysis: Outline**

#### **Introduction**

At the top of the page include the following information

Date of encounter: June 27, 1994  
Length of encounter: 60 minutes  
Number of sessions: first and only session

Write up n introductory paragraph that introduces the session and sets it in context. Include in this paragraph:

- (a) information relevant to this meeting  
Relate any information about this meeting that is particularly relevant: This was our first meeting and we had never met before; the meeting occurred in the middle of a crowded room with little privacy; the person was extremely upset because she had just received news of her mother's illness; this conversation occurred at 2 a.m. over the phone, etc.
- (b) pastoral intent  
Describe what you are trying to do in this meeting, including any goals you have. What do you bring to this session? I bring an open mind and heart and a willingness to listen to this person's story. I have recently experienced a loss similar to his and I bring that experience with me. I hope that I may draw upon that experience while I remain open to hearing his particular experience and feelings. My goals are to connect with the person, to establish trust and rapport and to assess what his needs are. I bring a willingness to pray, to share scriptural resources where appropriate and to provide emotional and spiritual support and understanding.

The **analysis section** of the verbatim should be at least as long as the verbatim report section, 5-8 pages. This is the section that will be graded.

### 1. **The Person/The Relationship**

Begin with describing the person, giving any facts pertinent to understanding this encounter. Comment also on your relationship with person – in general, and in the context of this encounter.

In particular, focus on describing:

- (a) Theological, psychological, sociological, and physical needs and concerns of the person.
  - Is she searching for forgiveness in her life?
  - Is he angry about a lost relationship?
  - Is she grieving the loss of a job?
  - Does he lack a close supportive network of friends?
- (b) contextual issues relevant to this person and this relationship race, gender, issues of power, particularity of problem, morality  
(Patton 1993:39-61)
- (c) the helping relationship
  - your role, your identity, the importance of the relationship

### 2. **The Counselor**

Describe what was going on in you as you counseled this person. For this section, talk about your general feelings for the entire session. Use feeling words.

This was the first time I had ever formally counseled with someone and I was really nervous. I was afraid that I would say all the wrong things. As the session progressed, I relaxed and felt more hopeful and confident about my listening abilities.

### 3. **Dynamic Interplay**

This section should receive the most emphasis. In this section you are to explore what was going on between you and the person, as you understand it. This is done:

(a) subjectively

Identify your own feelings and concerns and comment on these feelings and concerns, especially in relation to how well you did or did not do.

In C18 I felt really scared, even overwhelmed, because of the seriousness of what she was saying. What I did say was not very helpful, as evidenced by his response in P18.

(b) objectively

Analyze the interaction itself, particularly in relation to helping skills. The following questions a few guidelines of how you might comment on the interaction:

Did I use a lot of empathy, or too little? (Was I able to see the world from her perspective and to communicate this to her?) Did I ask a lot of questions? (Too many? Too few? Open ended or closed? How did the person respond? Were the questions helpful and appropriate? (Was I supportive? Or did I challenge too much? What do I see as my strengths and where do I need to improve?

If you have studied the Egan model, refer specifically to skills as described by Egan: Was I attentive? Did I listen well? Did I use basic empathy? Probes? Did I help the person focus? Did I even use advanced sympathy? Did I self/disclose? Was it appropriate? Did I use immediacy? What type? Where might I have used some immediacy?

In your analysis refer especially to the encounter numbers:

C15 was a good basic empathetic response.

C18, C19 and C20 were all probes – too much! I never used empathy in-between.

In your analysis, also comment on your skills overall:

Generally, I asked too many closed questions and did not use enough empathy. I see I never used any immediacy, and yet this skill would have been especially appropriate in C22 and C45.

## 5. Pastoral Opportunities

Comment on what you will do the next time you see this person or another person with a similar situation/problem.

The next time we meet I will be more supportive, ask fewer questions, allow him to do more of the talking.

The next time I meet with someone who talks about seeing no hope in the future, I will know to check out whether she is contemplating suicide.

## 6. Theological Reflection

Comment on the encounter theologically. Did you see God acting in this situation? How? Where? Did you use any particular religious resources (prayer, ritual, my faith)? Are there any church teachings or any scripture passages that are especially relevant to your understanding of this person and this encounter? Which ones and why? What are some of the theological themes that emerge from your reflection? (suffering, resurrection, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation) What theological or ethical issues or questions arise for you? During the session I kept thinking about the parable of the Good Samaritan and how I need to get right down there in the ditch with someone both to understand their point of view and their needs and hurts, and to show them I am willing and able to be with them fully. I felt in this situation I was reluctant to be in the ditch with the person. This raises for me a number of theological concerns, most particularly the issue of forgiveness. This is a person who has hurt me in the past and I wonder if I have forgiven her enough to be able to minister to her. I know that I was not comfortable praying with her even though she asked for my prayers.

## VERBATIM OUTLINE

### Preliminary Fact Sheet (Optional)

1. Facts of General Interest (Background information on person)
2. Person's Initial Concerns (Why did she call you?; Why is he here?)
3. Counselor's Initial Response (How do you react?)
4. Notes of Other People (Is anyone else involved in the conversation? Say something about them.)

### REPORT

C1 \_\_\_\_\_

C = Counselor

P1 \_\_\_\_\_

P = Person

C2 \_\_\_\_\_

P2 \_\_\_\_\_

C3 \_\_\_\_\_

P3 \_\_\_\_\_

C4 \_\_\_\_\_

### ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration (length of session): \_\_\_\_\_

Number of session: \_\_\_\_\_

Information relevant to this session: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastoral Intent: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. The Person/The Relationship

- (a) theological, psychological, sociological and physical needs and concerns
- (b) contextual issues: race, gender, issues of power, particularity of problem, morality
- (c) the helping relationship

#### 2. The Counselor

significant feelings

#### 3. Dynamic Interplay (most emphasis)

**4. Pastoral Opportunities**

next time

**5. Theological Reflection**

religious sources, biblical and theological themes, God's action, ethical issues

## MINISTRY PAPER

### A. Definition

The Ministry Paper is the final academic requirement for those students following the Graduate Certificate in Theology program. It is a major project whose purpose is to create an opportunity for students to put into writing their critical understanding of the theological nature and basic criteria of church-related ministry. This understanding has been formed by several years of reading, research, class lectures and discussions, as well as personal reflections and experiences. The Ministry Paper is seen as a final formal opportunity to reflect upon, to synthesize and to present this understanding in some integral fashion.

### B. Procedure:

1. Before beginning work on this paper, students should meet with their assigned academic advisor to ensure that they have an adequate understanding of what is expected in this paper. The following description offers a typical format and methodology that could be followed.
2. Basically, the paper should consist of **three** parts, should be at least 15 pages in length, and should follow the stylistic form found in K. L. Turabian's **A Manual of Style For Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations**.
  - a. The first part should serve as a sort of Introduction and should state what you see the purpose of the paper to be and what you are trying to express by the way you have chosen to write the next two sections.
    - i. In other words, what do **you** see as the purpose in writing this paper? Why have you chosen the particular approach/schema for talking about ministry? etc.
    - ii. This section should be 1-2 pages.
  - b. The **second part** should describe what you understand 'ministry' to mean from a theoretical perspective. In other words, What is ministry? What has it meant in the past and why? How has that changed? From where do you draw your definitions? Why?
    - i. This section should draw upon some of your class resources and should represent some research on your part. Many students choose to write this section as sort of historical sketch. Others refer to a few major theologians. You need to choose and appropriate schema for yourself.
    - ii. This section should be 7-10 pages.
  - c. The **third part** of your paper should focus on what ministry now means to you personally.
    - i. This is the section that draws upon your own personal reflection of ministry

and what it means in our life. Has your concept changed at all? Is your definition in keeping with the scriptural/historical sketch you outlined in the second section?

ii. This section should be 5-7-pages.

3. Some important considerations:

- a. The above tripartite outline is a suggested format. The paper may be written entirely as an integration of theory and personal experience, without separating the sections.
- b. The Ministry Paper is not merely a research paper, nor is it exclusively a personal testimony. This paper is intended to be an extended reflection including both a description of theological criteria for ministry as well as your own personal reflection on these criteria.
- c. You need not use dozens of sources. Stick to 7-10 major texts for Part II. The quantity of texts used is not important. Choose your texts carefully and succinctly describe the essence of some major theological interpretations of ministry.
- d. Your personal reflection is as important as your theoretical description. However, your reflection hinges on a good solid definition/overview/history. One should flow from the other.
- e. Keep in touch with your advisor throughout the process. Not only will you need his or her approval of your initial outline and final paper but the faculty advisor is meant to be a resource to help stimulate your ideas and to direct you in helpful directions.
- f. Be sure to set up realistic time-lines with your advisor and keep to them.

4. Evaluation

- a. The deadline for the Ministry Paper is noted in the Academic Calendar (normally around March 1).
- b. The Ministry Paper is graded by the faculty advisor. If a grade of C is not earned the paper must be rewritten and submitted by April 15<sup>th</sup>.

# Research Paper

## Overview

The writer of a research paper uses primary sources, as interviews and questionnaires, and secondary sources, as books and periodicals written by knowledgeable people, to collect ideas on a narrowly defined topic. Then the writer, using this gathered information and her own best judgment and common sense, formulates a thesis statement (see Appendix C for information on thesis statements).

The thesis statement often appears near the beginning of a research paper, and because the thesis statement represents the writer's critical judgment about the topic, this statement is the major focus for the paper. The paper will demonstrate the validity of the thesis by logically tying together the writer's thoughtful ideas with pertinent information gathered from research.

A writer also presents the ideas he may find in research about views that diverge from the writer's thesis statement and may even be contrary to that statement.

It is important to be ethical, honest, in truthfully representing the findings of one's research, Further, it is important to give credit to other people for their ideas by properly citing and documenting all sources.

## Choosing a Research Paper Topic

Choosing a topic that interests you will make all the work easier. However, before centering on a topic, review library sources available to be sure it is possible to find adequate research. While you are considering topics, note those topics that are controversial or popular since they are more likely to generate, hopefully, useful research.

The following outlines the procedure involved in writing a research paper.

### I. Choosing a Topic

- A. Choose a topic of interest to you that may be easy to research considering the available resources. Choosing a controversial topic should have research with clear positions; choosing a popular topic should have many current words to consult.
- B. Survey textbooks and class notes for interesting subject ideas. Reading the table of contents of monographs on the subject area may suggest possible topics. Consult dictionary and encyclopedia articles also.
- C. If you are still unsure of a topic, ask the instructor for possible suggestions.

### II. Limiting the Scope of the Topic

- A. In a research paper the writer is expected to pursue his topic to its fullest extent. This goal is impossible to do in the limited space and time allotted without a well-defined and limited topic.
- B. After the student has chosen an interesting general topic, they should systematically divide it into smaller, more workable topics and choose one.

### **III. Preliminary Research and Working Bibliography**

- A. First, read general articles in encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other general reference works to gain broad understanding of the entire topic under investigation.
- B. Start building a bibliography from published bibliographies, the library catalog, guides to periodic literature; also use bibliographies and footnotes of monographs on the chosen topic.
- C. Keep track of the sources. One way is to use 3 x 5 index cards to record bibliographic information: author, title, city, publisher, and date, etc. Some researchers code each card with a different alphabetic letter.

### **IV. The Working Thesis Statement**

- A. The writer's purpose for gathering information from reference materials is to offer an interpretation of the facts by exercising his or her critical judgment. This interpretation of judgment is stated in the thesis statement.
- B. The thesis statement is the point the writer is trying to make about the topic. It is a proposition about the topic that is presented and defended by argumentation. It is a statement that can be proved or disproved through the presentation of facts.
- C. Ordinarily, while the researcher is becoming familiar with the material, he or she can only formulate a temporary thesis statement or several working research questions to help guide the gathering of material. It is only at the end of the research process that the student should write a clear concise thesis statement that will be argued tightly in the paper.

### **V. Working Outline**

- A. The working outline is a formal outline using main headings and main subdivisions of the proposed topic to be researched.
- B. The outline presupposes a pattern of organization for writing the paper.
  - 1. A pattern of organization is an orderly means to develop a thesis logically so it clearly progresses towards its proposed conclusion.
  - 2. There are many patterns of organization to use. For a paper to be coherent the writer must think about her topic and the research uncovered, and then choose a pattern of organization best suited to the material and that will aid the reader in following the writer's argument to its conclusion.
  - 3. Once a pattern of organization is decided upon, the working outline is easy to write.

- C. As research progresses, this working outline typically becomes upgraded with additional main subdivisions and sentences or phrases to indicate what will be said about the topic and where in the paper it will be said.
- D.

## **VI. Taking Notes**

- A. Despite technology, the best way to take notes is the 4 x 6 or 5 x 8 note card.
- B. There are many ways to code a note card. One way is to number each card, then identify it further by a word code from the part of the outline to which it corresponds, add the name of the author for the work noted, add the alphabetic code from the bibliography card of the work cited, and finally the page(s) of the idea cited.
- C. Notes a writer places on note cards should transfer or convert evidence in the sources to notes that may be used to support the thesis statement.
- D. Write only one idea on each card so the cards may be sorted easily later.

## **VII. The Expanded Outline**

Sort all note cards according to the topics on the original outline

While writing the expanded topic outline, the researcher attempts to become more specific about the approach that will be used to support the paper's thesis.

As the outline is written and expanded again and again, a plan for supporting each main heading of the topic outline is devised.

If more research is needed, it can easily be detected at this time.

## **VIII. First Draft**

- A. The first draft is written by the author alone and is a working version of the final paper. The first draft is the best way of getting all the facts, opinions, and ideas on paper in such a way that they can be moved around, reformulated, or polished. Always write the first draft with double-spacing and with wide margins to aid in the revision process.
- B. The first draft is written quickly, directly from note cards and follows the expanded outline closely. Spend no unnecessary time at this point in hunting for the correct words or the proper transitions.
- C. The first draft should be reread several times (some find it helpful to wait a few days before revising anything) making changes in order, style, and substance until the paper is clear, concise, logical, and smooth-flowing.

- D. The writer should take special care to insure that the introduction states the thesis clearly and that the conclusion summarizes what the paper has shown. the Writer needs to be sure that the transitions between section of the paper are clear and logical.

## **IX. The Final Paper**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE HUMANITIES SYSTEM OF DOCUMENTATION BASED ON TURABIAN

The following material, based mostly on *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian, gives the general layout for a simple paper using the humanities style of documentation and includes some information about dealing with words related to theology.

A capital “T” for Turabian followed by a decimal number tells the place in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* you will find more information. Sometimes this book refers to information in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition; references to *The Chicago Manual of Style* are indicated by a capital “C” followed by a decimal number reference.

## Margins and Line Spacing

In general, leave one-inch margins all around the text (T 14.2), and double-space the text. (T 1.2)

Single-space the text of notes, itemized lists, and bibliographic entries. Allow a blank line between notes and bibliographic entries. (T 1.2)

## Prose Quotations

Short, eight lines or less, prose quotations are enclosed in double quotation marks and incorporated into the text. But to set off a small quotation for emphasis or comparison, treat it as a longer (block) quotation described next.

A prose quotation of over eight lines, called a block quote, appears without quotation marks, the entire quotation is indented four spaces from the left margin and single spaced. Indent an additional four spaces to begin a paragraph of the quotation and single-space between paragraphs. (T 5.4) Leave adequate space around block quotations and any added graphics.

## Capitalization

*Religious Titles and Offices* (C 7.21) Examples:

the pope, the papacy; Pope John Paul II  
the cardinal, the sacred college of cardinals; Jerome Cardinal Sikorski *or less formally*, Cardinal Jerome Sikorski  
the bishop, bishopric; diocese; Bishop Donovan, the bishop of Toledo; the Catholic bishop of Toledo

*Religious Names and Terms* (C 7.77-.95—just a sample of this reference set follows; reading all of C 7.77-.95 in *The Chicago Manual of Style* would be wise.):

Pronouns referring to a supreme being are preferably not capitalized:

God in his (or her) mercy  
Jesus and his disciples  
Allah in his mercy  
Yahweh and his commandments

Derivatives, whether adjectives or nouns, are not capitalized:

Allah's oneness  
God's fatherhood, kingship, omnipotence  
messianic hope

Words for transcendent ideas, especially when used religiously, are often capitalized:

Good; Beauty; Truth; One

Religious Writings:

Bible; biblical  
Gospels (*but* the gospel)  
Hebrew Bible  
Psalter (*but* a psalter)  
Scripture(s) (i.e., the Bible); scriptural (C 7.87)  
Septuagint

*Note: Unlike titles of other books, titles of sacred Scriptures—the Bible, Talmud, Upanishads, etc., and the names of books of the Bible and the Apocrypha—are neither italicized nor put in quotation marks. (T 4.21)*

Creeds and Confessions:

Apostles' Creed; the creed  
Luther's Ninety-five Theses  
the Thirty-nine Articles

## **Titles**

*Books of the Bible* Without italicizing or underlining, spell out whole chapters or whole books of the Bible or the Apocrypha. (T 2.20) For example:  
Genesis, chapter 5, is a genealogy.

*Scriptural References* For exact biblical and apocryphal references use abbreviations in text or in notes. Tell the chapter and verse, separated by either a colon or a period (be consistent); identify which version is being cited. (T 2.21 and T 8.129) For example:  
Jn 10: 4-5 NAB.

As an alternative, the version of the Bible may be identified in a statement near the beginning of the paper; then, the version may be omitted in text and footnote citations.

For lists of abbreviated forms for the books of the Bible and the Psalms, *see Appendix A or C* 14.34 (follow the second set for the New American Bible) and C 14.35.

*Format for Titles* Capitalize the titles of all works, published or not, in headline style. (T 8.37); i.e., capitalize the first word, the last word, and all other words in a title except articles, prepositions, *to* used as part of an infinitive, and coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, nor, for*). (T 4.5-4.6)

Titles for whole published works, except for titles of sacred Scriptures and the names of books of the Bible and the Apocrypha, may be italicized (preferred) or underlined; never use both italics and underlining in the same paper. As a general rule, italicize the titles of *whole* published works (books, pamphlets, bulletins, periodicals, and long poems), but put *parts* of these works in quotation marks (chapter titles or other divisions of a book, essays, and articles in periodicals). (T 4.15-17)

A subtitle is preceded by a colon and is capitalized the same way as the main title. For example: *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses*  
*Format for Titles of Church Documents and their Citation* (See **Appendix B**)

## **Abbreviations**

In the text, spell out the term to be abbreviated the first time it is used followed by the term's abbreviation in parenthesis. From then on, you may use the abbreviation alone. (T 1.27)

*Saint* may be abbreviated before the name of a Christian saint (e.g., Saint Joseph, Saint Catherine); however, *Saint* is omitted before the names of apostles, evangelists, and church fathers (e.g., John, Peter, Augustine, Jerome). (T 2.9)

For lists of abbreviated forms for the books of the Bible and the Psalms, *see Appendix A, or C* 14.34 (follow the second set for the New American Bible) and C 14.35.

Titles of journals and other sources used frequently in a paper may be abbreviated by the initials of the words of their titles, without spaces or periods between the letters. Such abbreviations are permissible in notes but not in bibliographical entries. (T 8.19)

## **Plurals of Numbers**

Add *s* alone for the plural of numbers expressed as digits (e.g., 1950s, 1700s). (T 2.68)

## **Possessives**

Traditionally, the possessive of Jesus and Moses is formed by adding only an apostrophe (e.g., Jesus' life, Moses' speech). (T 3.8)

## **Title Page and Subsequent Pagination**

A title page may include the name of the school, the paper's full title, the course (department and number), the date, and the name of the writer. The title page does not count as page 1. (T 1.7 and 1.34)

For all pages after the title page, place page numbers either at the center top or in the upper right corner of each page. (T 14.8)

## Footnotes

*Style* In the humanities style of documentation footnotes (hereafter called notes) are preferred over endnotes. (T 8.1-.2)

Notes are of two kinds each of which has two purposes: (1) reference notes, used to cite sources or used to tell cross-references and (2) content (or substantive) notes, used to comment on, discuss, or amplify the material referenced or used to make acknowledgements. (T 8.3)

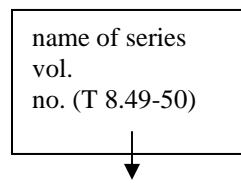
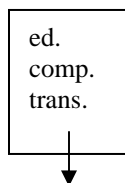
*Note Reference Placement* Introduce a note reference with a superscript Arabic numeral alone—no period following the numeral. The superscript numeral follows any mark of punctuation except the dash, which it precedes, and goes outside a closing parenthesis. (T 8.9) Strive to place a note reference after the passage it refers to, at the end of a sentence or a clause. Place a note reference at the end of an exact quotation. (T 8.11)

*Note Text Placement* Note text must begin on the page where it is referenced and is placed at the bottom of a page below a short rule. Note text is single-spaced, but a blank line appears between one note and the next. (T 8.15)

It is preferable to begin note text by indenting the same amount as for paragraph openings in the paper itself; then on the line, key the note number followed by a period. However, it is also acceptable to use the many computer programs that generate notes with superscript numerals. (T 8.10)

*Note Text: Book* Items for an initial note text for a book include the following (T 8.24), although not all items will occur in any given case:

- Full name of author in normal sequence followed by a comma
- Title and subtitle (with a colon following a title before a subtitle) place a comma
- Name of editor, compiler, or translator, if any (place the appropriate abbreviation then the name; follow each set with a comma)
- Number or name of edition, if it is not the first—tell the edition number followed by the abbreviation—ed.
- Name of series in which book appears (this title is neither italicized nor underlined) also tell volume or number in the series using appropriate abbreviations
- Facts of publication (in parenthesis)
  - Place of publication followed by a colon
  - Name of publishing agency followed by a comma
  - Date of publication
  - Page number(s) of the specific citation followed by a period



1. Name, *Title: Subtitle*, Name(s), Edition (City: Publisher, year), page(s).

Example of initial note text for a book:

1. Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 124-5.

Author: check a book's title page for the author's name; place it in normal sequence; follow it with a comma. (T 8.26)

Title: check title page and capitalize headline style in italics or underlined; use a colon between the title and subtitle (if any); omit a following comma if the parenthesis for publication data immediately follows. (T 8.38)

Editor, translator, or compiler: check the title page for an editor, translator, or compiler; use the appropriate abbreviation (ed., trans., or comp.) and key the name; place a comma after each set. (T 8.40)

Edition: required if the work is not the first edition; check title page and copyright page, abbreviate (ed.), e.g., 4th ed. (T 8.44)

Facts of Publication: place everything in parenthesis, but no comma precedes the beginning parenthesis. The order is: beginning parenthesis; name the city (usually the first one if more than one is mentioned) place a colon and space once; name the publishing agency (see T 8.59) place a comma and space once; name the copyright year; close with the ending parenthesis and place a comma. For example: (Cleveland: World, 2003),

Next tell pages number references (T 2.67). Use abbreviations p. and pp. only to avoid confusion. (T 8.70) End with a period.

### **Important Exceptions: (T 8.51)**

*Biblical Classical, and Medieval Works* Omit all facts of publication. (T 8.129)

- ❖ *Scriptural References* For exact biblical and apocryphal references use abbreviations in text or in notes. Tell the chapter and verse, separated by either a colon or a period (be consistent); identify which version if being cited. (T 2.21 and T 8.129) For example:  
Jn 10: 4-5 NAB.

For lists of abbreviated forms for the books of the Bible and the Psalms, *see Appendix A or C 14.34* (follow the second set for the *New American Bible*) *and C 14.35*.

- ❖ *Dictionaries, General Encyclopedias, and Atlases* Omit all but the edition and date; s.v. stands for *sub verbo, sub voce* "under the word"—plural, s.vv. (T 8.112) e.g.,  
2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. "Angelico, Fra," by Mario Salmi.

Note: Unless they are specialized reference books for theology, well-known reference books; i.e., encyclopedias and dictionaries, although cited in notes, are not generally included in bibliographies (T 8.112); in addition, Scripture references appear in the text or in notes but are left out of a bibliography (C 15.294).

*Note Text: Periodical (Journal)* Although periodicals include journals, magazines, and newspapers, only journals are dealt with here.

Items for an initial note text for a journal article include:

- Full name of author in normal sequence followed by a comma (as in books)
- Title and subtitle in quotation marks (with a colon following a title before a subtitle)
- Title of journal in italics
- Volume and issue number (or both) (T 8.101)
- Publication date (in parenthesis and a colon follows)
- Page number(s) of the specific citation followed by a period

Separate all of the above with commas, except place dates in parentheses and use a colon to introduce the page reference. (T 8.99)

Treat author names as in book citations, but place article titles in quotation marks and italicize or underline the titles of journals. (T 8.100) An example of a journal citation follows:

3. Robert C. Tannehill, "The Story of Zacchaeus as Rhetoric: Luke 19:1-10," *Semeia*, 64 (1994): 203.

### **Subsequent references**

If the citation is from the same author and work as in a fully cited note immediately preceding; use *Ibid.*, a comma, and if from another page(s), the new page number(s). (T 8.85) For example:

4. *Ibid.*, 117.

But if the new reference is to a work previously cited in full but not immediately preceding the new citation, give the author's family name; the title of the work (sometimes shortened); and the specific page reference. (T 8.88) For example for a book:

5. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 139.

Example of a second journal article text reference:

6. Tannehill, "Story of Zacchaeus," 206.

*Electronic Documents* For examples: see (T 8.141) Basic material for a note includes:

- Author and title of the item
- Name and description of the source cited
- City of publication or access (or both), if any
- Publisher or vendor (or both)
- Date of publication or access
- Identifying numbers or pathway needed for access to material

### **Content (Substantive) Notes**

Used to add comments, explanations, or expansions on information without breaking the flow of thought in the paper. Because content notes to a certain extent explain and amplify the textual discussion they tend to more closely resemble the text than reference notes. (T 8.149)

A content note may be worked into a sentence or may follow as a separate item.

For a fictitious example:

3. A comprehensive table of the number of Catholics in each European country by decades through the 1900s may be found in J. B. Prentiss, *Statistics on Religious Affiliations in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Table 3, 93.

*Previously Cited:* For a source previously cited, the source title may be shortened, facts of publication omitted, and only a page reference given. A fictitious example follows:

7. J. B. Prentiss offers a list of possible reasons for these changes in *Statistics on Religious Affiliations*, 115-7.

### **Bibliography—Humanities Style**

Note: References to Scriptures are usually found only in the text or footnotes (C 15.294); and well-known reference books, i.e. encyclopedias and dictionaries, are also not generally included in bibliographies. (T 8.112)

The bibliography lists the sources consulted in the paper. Place the bibliography on its own page at the end of a paper.

Use a heading for the bibliography like: Sources Consulted, Words Cited, or Selected Bibliography. (T 9.2) Two inches from the top of the page center the heading keyed in full capitals. (T 14.10)

Although an author's name appears in natural order in a note, in a bibliography the family name comes first—inverted order (but when a source has more than one author, only the first author's name is inverted, all the other names are in natural order). (T 9.9-.10)

Alphabetize entries. (T 9.14) Use single spacing and a hanging indent for each entry, with a single blank line between entries. (T 9.8)

Generally, where a comma or parenthesis appears in a footnote, substitute a period with a space following, in the bibliography entry. (T 9.10-11)

*Book* For example, compare the following footnote with its bibliographic entry:

1. Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 124-5.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

*Articles and Parts of longer Works* List page numbers in a bibliography only if the source is a part of a whole work, as a book's chapter or an article in a periodical. (T 9.12) Be aware that periodicals use parenthesis around dates of publication following volume number. Compare the following note with its bibliographic entry (T 9.11):

2. Robert C. Tannehill, "The Story of Zacchaeus as Rhetoric: Luke 19: 1-10, *Semeia*, 64: 1994. 203.

Tannehill, Robert C. "The Story of Zacchaeus as Rhetoric: Luke 19:1-10." *Semeia*, 64 (1994): 201-21.

Recall that although the titles of journals, theological dictionaries, theological encyclopedias, and other sources used frequently in a paper may have an acceptable abbreviated title all right to use in notes, such abbreviations are not permissible in bibliographical entries. (T 8.19)

### **Annotated Bibliography**

You may comment on some of your sources or on all of them.

If you have a comment about a source, place the comment on a line following the bibliographical entry and begin with a five-space indent. Grammatical completeness is not required for your comment (annotation) but begin with a capital letter and end with a period. (T 9.36)

## List of Abbreviations for Books of the Bible

Following is the second listing from C 14.34 showing abbreviations used by scholars who prepared the New American Bible.

<b>Old Testament</b>			
Genesis	Gn	Proverbs	Prv
Exodus	Ex	Ecclesiastes	Eccl
Leviticus	Lv	Song of Songs	Sg (Song)
Numbers	Nm	Wisdom	Wis
Deuteronomy	Dt	Sirach	Sir
Joshua	Jos	Isaiah	Is
Judges	Jgs	Jeremiah	Jer
Ruth	Ru	Lamentations	Lam
1 Samuel	1 Sm	Baruch	Bar
2 Samuel	2 Sam	Ezekiel	Ez
1 Kings	1 Kgs	Daniel	Dn
2 Kings	2 Kgs	Hosea	Hos
1 Chronicles	1 Chr	Joel	Jl
2 Chronicles	2 Chr	Amos	Am
Ezra	Ezr	Obadiah	Ob
Nehemiah	Neh	Jonah	Jon
Tobit	Tb	Micah	Mi
Judith	Jdt	Nahum	Na
Esther	Est	Habakkuk	Hb
1 Maccabees	1 Mc	Zephaniah	Zep
2 Maccabees	2 Mc	Haggai	Hg
Job	Jb	Zechariah	Zec
Psalms	Ps(s)	Malachi	Mal
<b>New Testament</b>			
Matthew	Mt	1 Timothy	1 Tm
Mark	Mk	2 Timothy	2 Tm
Luke	Lk	Titus	Ti
John	Jn	Philemon	Phlm
Acts of the Apostles	Acts	Hebrews	Heb
Romans	Rom	James	Jas

1 Corinthians	1 Cor	1 Peter	1 Pt
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	2 Peter	2 Pt
Galatians	Gal	1 John	1 Jn
Ephesians	Eph	2 John	2 Jn
Philippians	Phil	3 John	3 Jn
Colossians	Col	Jude	Jude
1 Thessalonians	1 Thes	Revelation	Rv
2 Thessalonians	2 Thes		

<b>Versions and Sections</b>			
Syr.	Syriac	RSV	Revised Standard Version
MT	Masoretic Text	EV	English version(s)
LXX	Septuagint	AT	American Translation
Vulg.	Vulgate	NAB	New American Bible
AV	Authorized (King James) Version	NEB	New English Bible
DV	Douay Version	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
RV	Revised Version	OT	Old Testament
RV m	Revised Version, margin	Apoc.	Apocrypha
ERV	English Revised Version	NT	New Testament
ER m	English Revised Version, margin		
ARV	American Revised Version		
ARV m	American Revised Version, margin		

## **Format for Titles of Church Documents and their Citation**

The titles of church documents are italicized (preferred) or underlined even if the document is short and is contained in another book. If the document has both a Latin and an English title, use one or the other, not both.

Cite the sources of the document (published separately, or within an anthology, or taken from the internet) the first time it is cited. Ordinarily use paragraph numbers to locate a specific reference, not a page number. Subsequent references to the document can be abbreviated. Use page numbers only if the document does not have paragraph numbers. (Sr. Mary McCormick)

See your instructor regarding formatting notes and bibliography.

### **Citing Lecture Notes**

Follow this form: Name of lecturer, Class in *Title of class*, “topic”, (lecture presented at school, place, date of lecture). (M. Rini and T 8.132) For example:

5. Rev. Donald H. Dunson, Ph.D., Class in *Fundamental Moral Theology*, “Determinism” (lecture presented at Center for Pastoral Leadership, Wickliffe, Ohio, on October 27, 2000).

In bibliography: (T 11.54)

Dunson, Rev. Donald, H., Ph.D. Class in *Fundamental Moral Theology*. “Determinism”.  
Lecture. Center for Pastoral Leadership. Wickliffe, Ohio. October 27, 2000.

# Overview of the Writing Process

## The Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is a one-sentence assertion giving the central argument of a composition. Generally placed near the beginning of a composition, an effective thesis statement has the following characteristics:

- ❖ Stated in one declarative statement You want your reader to remember this—your main point—so write one clear, succinct sentence to state that point.
- ❖ Stated assertively Omit phrases such as "I think that" or "I believe that" and just state the point.
- ❖ Stated specifically In anticipation of the rest of your essay, you should include the reasons this idea is true or most probably should be true.

**TIP:** To fully understand the opposing viewpoint, debate your topic with someone who disagrees with your thesis. Your opponent's arguments will help you know what concessions to include in your composition.

Make an outline to guide the logical flow of your writing.

## Writing the Paper

An Interesting Opening:

1. Provides background information
2. States your thesis
3. Establishes the tone (the author's attitude toward his subject) of your composition
4. Stimulates reader interest

**TIP:** Never begin a paper with phrases such as "In this paper I am going to . . ." or "This essay will prove that . . ." The reader will be yawning before she finishes your first paragraph.

How to Interest the Reader:

- ❖ Tell a story
- ❖ Ask questions
- ❖ Establish the significance of your subject
- ❖ Begin with a quotation
- ❖ Use contrast
- ❖ Give an example
- ❖ Explain your general topic and narrow to your specific point
- ❖ Surprise, shock, or startle the reader
- ❖ Combine above methods

**TIP:** The type of sentences you write and the words you choose creates your writing style. No matter what style you adopt or develop, strive to write sentences that are clear and interesting.

Effective Closings:

1. Describe effects

2. Make predictions
3. Make recommendations
4. Complete a circle (refer to something you mentioned earlier in the composition, often in the opening, thus circling back and closing a loop)
5. Ask questions

**TIP:** *Don't throw away prewriting, outlines, or drafts of a document until the paper is complete and delivered to your reader.*

## **Confidence and Assertiveness**

Avoid hedging, apologies, and disclaimers. Adding certain phrases to your sentences will result in writing that seems timid and unsure. The term "hedging" effectively describes the first group of phrases. "To hedge," means to avoid a firm commitment by making statements that allow you to withdraw or escape from your position. Some common hedging phrases are:

- It seems to me
- I think
- I believe
- I feel that
- In my opinion

All of these phrases inject a note of uncertainty into your writing by calling attention to the fact that these are your thoughts alone. They indirectly suggest *your* thoughts do not necessarily represent prevailing wisdom. Therefore, they call into question the validity of your statements.

Furthermore, hedging phrases are redundant, adding unnecessary words to your sentences. Because you are writing the statements, you obviously believe it, think it, feel it; therefore, it's unnecessary to say so.

Another form of hedging occurs with the qualifier, a word that limits an idea or makes it less positive. Common qualifiers include *probably, maybe, seems, and some*. Overuse of these words results in timid, wimpy writing.

**TIP:** *Your ideas and opinions matter. You have a right to state what you believe.*

Hedging also includes "fence sitting," or refusing to take a stand about an issue. This indecision will reduce the reader's confidence in your writing.

Apologies and disclaimers are another group of phrases that undermine the confidence of writing. An apology is an acknowledgement of some weakness or deficiency, usually in the writer's understanding or information. Similarly, "to disclaim" means "to disown," which involves rejecting responsibility for a statement. Common apologies and disclaimers include phrases such as:

- I don't really know much about this, but . . .
- I'm not really sure, but . . .
- I'm no expert, but . . .
- I don't have a degree in this, but . . .

By using such phrases, you immediately destroy your credibility for the reader, who will probably dismiss your thoughts as unreliable. If you really don't know what you need to know about the topic, *don't write about it until you gather more information.*

Don't water d own your writing with hedging, apologies, and disclaimers. Instead, state your idea as though it is truth that everyone accepts (or should). When you write, take a stand, believe in your position, and avoid phrases that cast doubt upon your viewpoint.

*TIP: Avoid including too many effusive adjectives in your writing. Words such as really, truly, marvelous, wonderful, and fantastic add an exaggerated quality and undermine your authoritative tone.*

### Avoid Offending or Insulting your Reader

Use no name-calling; avoid a condescending or dismissive tone; be careful of emotionally loaded words.

### Emotionally Loaded Words

The denotative (dictionary) and connotative (emotional) meaning of words must be considered. The connotative meanings of words help us accurately and confidently communicate our thoughts and feelings about a topic. They also help us urge the reader to feel a certain way about that topic.