WRITING A TERM PAPER: 10 BASIC STEPS

1. **Explore your topic**: Read to gain a broad understanding of your topic. (Encyclopedias or the Internet can be useful at this stage.)

2. **Form a thesis**: Once you know enough about your topic, come up with a single point about it—a point that your entire paper will prove or support. Write this point down in a single sentence. (Your thesis is tentative; it can always be adjusted as you gain new insight during your research.)

3. **Take notes**: Once you have located some reliable sources, record *only those points that will support your thesis*. Except for direct quotations, all information should be taken down in concise note form, in your own words. Identify the exact source of all information. [The use of note cards is recommended; it allows you to organize your research more effectively.]

4. **Organize your research**: Prepare an outline and arrange your notes, bringing together points from different sources as necessary. [You might have to revise your thesis or to look for further information at this point.]

5. **Draft the paper**: Write the introduction, body paragraphs (with the necessary citations or footnotes), and conclusions.

6. **Edit the paper**: Thoroughly check and improve everything—from structure, paragraphing, thesis statement and topic sentences, to punctuation, grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

7. **Rewrite**: Type the final version of your paper with close attention to format instructions (MLA or APA style), and finalize your citations or footnotes.

8. **Prepare the bibliography**: Arrange your formal list of all sources. [Follow format models with care; MLA and APA styles are quite different.]

9. **Prepare the title page**: Following the assigned format, arrange the title page. Be sure to use a title that clearly indicates your actual *thesis*—not just your topic.

10. **Proofread:** Check the entire paper, looking for typographical errors and similar minor faults. (Other mistakes should have been corrected at the editing stage)