A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing a Research Paper

Step One: The Preliminaries

☐ Choose a topic
☐ Begin preliminary reading
☐ Restrict or limit your subject
☐ Develop a preliminary thesis sentence

Step Two: Gathering Data

☐ Compile a working bibliography
☐ Prepare the bibliography entry on 3” x 5” cards in correct bibliographical form
☐ Begin extensive work in the library; be sure to check
  ☐ general bibliographies
  ☐ trade bibliographies
  ☐ indexes
  ☐ card catalogue
  ☐ computer resources

Step Three: Taking Notes

☐ Develop a preliminary outline
☐ Evaluate source material: which is primary material and which is secondary material?
☐ Begin taking notes, preferably on 4” x 6” cards, which can be arranged and sorted
☐ Avoid plagiarism by labeling your notes as quoted, paraphrased, or summarized

Step Four: Writing the Paper

☐ Develop the final outline; test your outline
☐ Prepare to write:
  ☐ put note cards in the same order as the outline
  ☐ decide on the proper tense for the paper
☐ Write the rough draft
☐ Revise and rewrite
☐ Edit; check documentation carefully
☐ Type the paper according to the instructor’s format
☐ Proofread

Remember that the tutors in the Writing Center will be happy to help you with any step in the research paper writing process.