

Writing



Study Skills Services
323 Oswald Building
246-6537

Writing

In today's business world, most employers require that their employees have good writing skills. Many college students don't understand what is involved in the writing process. It is not possible to write a good paper in one day, or even in a week. The key to the writing process is to divide the assignment into steps and to set deadlines for each individual step.

Steps in Writing a Research Paper

- **Identify the type of paper.** In most cases, your instructor will tell you if the paper is to be a:
 - ◆ Theme or essay
 - ◆ Report
 - ◆ Term paper
 - ◆ Research paper
- **Determine the format of the paper.** Again, your instructor should indicate which of the following parts to include:
 - ◆ Title page
 - ◆ Table of contents
 - ◆ Abstract
 - ◆ Body
 - ◆ References
 - ◆ Appendices
- **Select the subject.** Sometimes your instructor will assign a specific topic. If the topic is your choice, you should select a subject based on your interest in it, the importance of the subject, or the availability of resources on the subject. Be careful that your subject is not too broad. The narrower your topic, the easier it will be to write about.



- **Gather/analyze research.** This may be the most important step of the writing process. Both quantity and quality are important when it comes to research. There are several methods of gathering research including library research, internet research, observation, interviews, personal experience, and personal inference. You should choose the method(s) that result(s) in your finding the most information. When gathering research, always evaluate the sources to determine relevancy, objectivity and bias, and the author's qualifications to speak on the subject. While analyzing research, you want to look for information that supports your thesis statement and note that information either by highlighting, making note cards, or summarizing/paraphrasing into rough sentences.
- **Make an outline for your paper.** Organize your research/information in a logical sequence. Identify themes that you want to include in your paper and determine main headings and subheadings. Look for supporting details within your research to be included under each main heading and subheading
- **Write first (rough) draft.** Your goal for this step is to simply get your ideas on paper. Don't worry about punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc. And remember, you don't have to write your paper in order. If you want, you can start with the conclusion.
- **Make revisions.** Allowing a few days between drafts gives you a fresh perspective. During this step, you should add/delete information, change sentence/paragraph order, and correct punctuation/grammar/spelling. Edit and rewrite as many times as necessary.
- **Proofread.** Polish up your paper. Make sure it is well-organized. Look for typos, misspelled words, grammar errors, etc. Have someone else proofread your paper. or

If you hit a roadblock at any point in the writing process, visit the Writing Center for assistance.

Setting a Writing Schedule

You should set your writing schedule as soon as the paper is assigned. In most cases, this will be the day you receive your syllabus. Using your calendar/planner, mark deadlines for the following steps:

- **Due date for the paper.**
- **Complete final revisions.** This should be at least one or two days before the paper is due.
- **Complete second (or third or fourth) drafts.** Remember to give yourself a few days between each draft.
- **Complete first (rough) draft.** This date should be no later than two weeks before the paper is due.
- **Complete outline.** This should be completed prior to writing your first draft.
- **Organize research.** This should be completed within a week of gathering your research.
- **Complete research.** This date should be no later than one month before the paper is due.
- **Select your topic.** This deadline should be approximately six weeks before the paper is due.

Reduce Writing Anxiety

- **Overcome negative self-talk.** Don't tell yourself you're not a good writer or you can't write a good paper.
- **Be relaxed and comfortable while writing.** Wear comfortable clothes, put on some soft music, drink coffee, etc.
- **Take breaks.** Physically get away from writing for a few minutes.
- **Ask for help.** Talk to your instructor or visit the Writing Center.
- **Learn from your mistakes.** Read the comments your instructor writes on your papers; they are there to help you.