

HOW TO WRITE THE PERFECT PAPER



How to Write the Perfect Paper



Prepare For Writing

1. Set a schedule

- Estimate how long each step will take
- Allow ample time for each step

2. Choose a general topic

- Based on Instructor's requirements
- Choose a subject that interests you

3. Do initial reading

- Review reference materials: books, articles, encyclopedia
- Ask yourself: "What do I want to know about this topic?"

4. Narrow your topic

- After initial reading, you can focus on a specific topic
- Instead of "health problems in America," try "cigarette smoking among teenagers"

5. Write a thesis statement

- Capture the main idea of your paper in one unified, clear sentence
- Describe your topic and what you want to convey about it: "Cigarette smoking among teenagers is on the rise."

6. Take notes on note cards

- Jot down quotations & ideas that clarify your research
- Write a summary of information covered, a brief statement, or a direct quotation

7. Prepare a bibliography

- List books, articles, Internet sources, and other resources you plan to use as support for points in your paper

Organize a Writing Plan

1. Generate main ideas about your topic. For a standard essay, 3 main ideas are plenty.
2. Organize your note cards using an outline format. Make sure each main idea has supporting information.

Write Your First Draft

1. *Write the introduction with a strong opening. Ideas for starting beginning paragraphs with a BANG!*

Start With –

- A Question
- A Hard-hitting Fact or Statistic
- An Appropriate Quotation
- Images – Description of a "Snapshot"
- An Anecdote – A Personal Experience
- A Problem
- A Concisely Stated Thesis statement that states the main idea for the entire paper
- A Contradiction or Inconsistency
- An Odd, Ridiculous, or Unbelievable Fact



2. Write the body of the paragraph.

- Present each main point logically
- Use supporting information from your note cards
- Write strong, focused opening sentences with details
- Add sentences with more specific details; expand with more information

3. Write the conclusion & tie together important points. Ways to conclude with **STRENGTH**:

- Issue a Call to Action -- Urge the reader to take action about your topic
- Discuss the Consequences of Your Argument
- Explain the Applications of Your Argument – Describe how your topic would work in the real world
- Make Recommendations
- Speculate About the Future
- Tell an Anecdote that Illustrates a Key Point
- Describe a Key Image – Describe a scene that illustrates a main idea about your topic
- Offer a Quotation that Expresses the Essence of Your Argument
- Ask a Rhetorical Question – A Question Asked for Effect that Neither Expects nor Requires an Answer

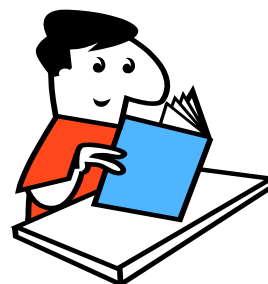


Edit Your Draft

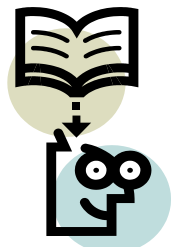
- Keep your audience in mind. Step back and review your paper from a reader's perspective.
- Sharpen your focus wherever possible. Revise your thesis and supporting paragraphs to reflect your narrowed topic.
- Check that key terms are adequately defined. Make sure your audience knows what you are trying to say.
- Revise for punctuation, grammar, & style
- Read your paper out loud to get a sense of the flow of your words
- Rework paragraphs for clarity & appropriate transitions
- Recheck your outline. Have you addressed all the points you wanted to make?

Prepare Your Final Draft

- Have a classmate, friend, or family member review your paper
- Have your instructor proof your paper
- Cite your sources
- Re-type your paper, making any necessary changes
- Make a copy for yourself, in case something happens to the copy you give your instructor



How to Generate Topic Ideas



- Brainstorm – For 10 minutes, write down as many ideas as you can without judging them
- Go to the library – look through newspapers, magazines, and new books
- Search on-line
- Keep a journal – Write down ideas, feelings, opinions, summaries of books and articles, and reactions to other papers or speeches
- Keep a file – Collect articles, poems, and a list of topics you find interesting
- Develop observation skills – Be aware of life around you. What topics are in the news? What are people talking about?
- Complete a sentence – The world would be better if...? A major problem today is...?
- Relax – Allow plenty of time for topic generation

Helpful Websites

Fact Monster Homework Center

<http://www.factmonster.com/homework/writingskills1.html>

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/#planning>

University of Richmond's Writing Web – links to many aspects of the writing process

<http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb.html>

Getting An "A" on an English Paper – Jack Lynch, Rutgers University

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/EngPaper/index.html>

Essay Info – guide to writing several different types of essays

<http://essayinfo.com/>