



Writing Papers

- ▶ Do you ever feel overwhelmed when you have a paper to write?
- ▶ Do you skip making an outline and just start writing?
- ▶ Do you wait until the last minute to begin?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, now is the time to work on improving your writing skills.

To succeed in college and a career, you must be able to clearly communicate your thoughts and ideas in writing.

Whether you are a strong writer or someone who struggles with writing assignments, following this step-by-step process makes writing a great paper easier and less stressful.

Six Steps to Writing a Great Paper

- Step 1 – Choose a topic
- Step 2 – Gather information
- Step 3 – Organize your ideas
- Step 4 – Write the first draft
- Step 5 – Rethink, revise, rewrite
- Step 6 – Write the final draft

Types of Papers

These are the most common types of papers assigned in college:

Report or Essay

- ▶ A paper that informs, explains, or persuades
- ▶ Generally 1–4 pages in length
- ▶ Focuses on one topic, idea, or argument
- ▶ Can include sources and/or your own ideas

Research or Term Paper

- ▶ Examines a topic in-depth and at greater length
- ▶ Requires research, organization, and documentation of outside sources
- ▶ Often requires specific formatting, such as MLA, APA, or Chicago

Narrative Paper

- ▶ Uses description, plot, and dialogue to tell a story
- ▶ Can be about something that actually happened or about something you've made up

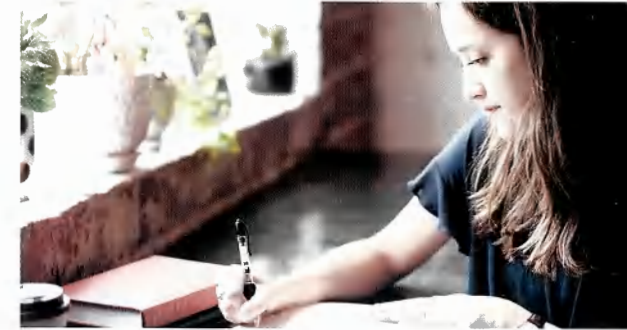


Thesis Statement

All reports, essays, research and term papers need a thesis statement.

A thesis statement is a sentence or two that tells what your paper is about. It explains what you believe, intend to prove, or plan to explain. To write a thesis statement, ask yourself, "What is the focus of this paper?"

The Writing Process



Following these six steps will help ensure that your papers are organized and well thought out.

Step 1. Choose a topic

- ▶ If you have a choice, choose a topic you're familiar with, or one you want to learn more about.
- ▶ Choose a topic that's not too broad. (Instead of writing about the Civil War, write about one battle.)
- ▶ Make sure there's plenty of information available on whatever topic you choose.

Step 2. Gather information

- ▶ Carefully read the assignment requirements and make sure you understand what your professor wants. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification.
- ▶ If you're using outside sources, create a system for gathering and organizing information. Use 3 x 5 index cards, a notebook, and/or printouts from online resources.
- ▶ Record accurate information for each source you use (e.g., title, author, page numbers, publisher). When obtaining information online, record the URL and date of access. You'll need this information to cite your sources.

Step 3. Organize your ideas

Before you begin writing, make an outline or diagram of your ideas.

- ▶ Put the main ideas in the order you want to present them.
- ▶ Write supporting ideas under each main idea.

Step 4. Write the first draft

- ▶ Expand your outline ideas into paragraphs.
- ▶ Don't worry about making mistakes. Just focus on getting your ideas down.

Step 5. Rethink, revise, and rewrite

Read your first draft out loud to see if it makes sense. Then revise and rewrite.

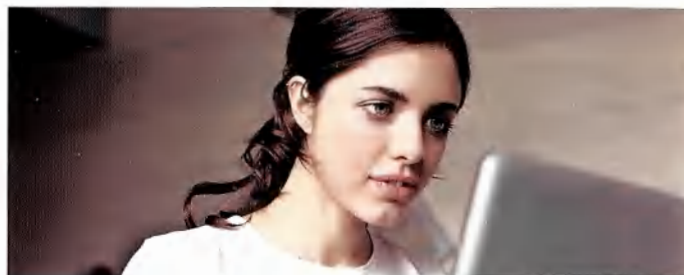
- ▶ Add explanations and details.
- ▶ Rewrite anything that isn't clear.
- ▶ Eliminate text that's unnecessary or repetitive.
- ▶ Vary your sentence structure and correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.
- ▶ Ask someone whose opinion you respect to read your paper and provide feedback.

Step 6. Write the final draft

- ▶ Reread your paper out loud one more time. Pay attention to the small details.
- ▶ Make sure your paper is formatted according to your professor's specifications.

Here are some additional tips to help you write an outstanding paper.

- ▶ Start early. Some papers will be quick and easy. Others are likely to be more challenging and time consuming. Give yourself plenty of time.
- ▶ Create a strong opening paragraph that includes a bold statement, notable quote, relevant statistic, or interesting example.
- ▶ Make sure your thesis statement is clear and concise.
- ▶ End with a strong closing paragraph that restates or summarizes the main idea.
- ▶ Always identify another person's words or ideas with quotation marks, footnotes, and by including a Works Cited/References page. If you present another person's words or ideas as your own it's plagiarism, and you may find yourself in violation of your college's academic code.
- ▶ Follow instructions regarding the paper's length, font, and spacing, and make sure your paper is submitted on time.
- ▶ Visit your college's Writing Center for help on any stage of the writing process. Even strong writers benefit from the input of others!



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