

SEVEN DAYS TO A GOOD PAPER

No. 20 in the Writing Center Handout Series

Day #1: Pick a topic.

- what are you interested in?
- what do you question?
- what do you agree with?
- what do you want to know more about?
- what do you react to, positively or negatively?

Follow the arrows to a good paper!

Day #2: Brainstorm

• Try free-writing. Set a time limit and write whatever comes into your mind. Don't worry about grammar or word choice - just write.

• Try narrowing. Look at your free writing and find connecting or central ideas and freewrite on those.

• Try listing ideas relevant to your topic.



Day #7: Fine tune.

• Check paragraphing. Are your transitions logical? Does the organization prove your thesis effectively?

• Check sentences for fragments. Try to use varied sentences - in length and structure.

• Check passive voice; only use it when absolutely necessary. The reader wants to know who is doing what, not what is being done.

• Check grammar, word choice, punctuation, and spelling. Don't rely solely on spellcheck - read your paper for errors!

• Use "thesis language," the same terms you use in the thesis, throughout the paper, especially in topic sentences and conclusions.

Day #3: Write a working thesis statement.

Find the points in your BRAINSTORM you most want to emphasize. What are the most important, relevant, new, exciting, or insightful ideas?

• Jot down a sentence that incorporates all those points into a single idea. This will be your working thesis. Don't worry - you can change it as you begin to write.

Ask yourself:

- Is my thesis interesting?
- Is it specific enough for the essay length?
- Does it make a provable claim about my topic?

Day #6: Redraft.

Read your draft aloud.

- Did you say what you wanted to, what you thought you did? Is it clearly stated?
- Does the reader ever have to make connections between points on her own?
- Are your complicated sentences easy to follow?
- Is your organization logical?
- Does the essay follow your thesis? Does your thesis follow your essay?

Back to work now!



Day #5: Take a break!



Day #4: Write a draft.

• Look at everything you have written. Use your working thesis, your main point, and your brainstorming notes to shape a draft.

• Just get your ideas on paper! The form of paragraphs and sentences.

• Don't worry about perfecting anything now.

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