

TIPS FOR ESSAY WRITING

1. Be sure you understand the assignment.

Know the audience, purpose, and length of your paper. You may want to meet with your instructor to get answers to your questions. Be sure to ask if you are required to use outside sources and, if so, what documentation style; while some instructors or departments want MLA, others prefer APA. You may want to ask to see a model or a sample essay to get an idea of expectations.

2. Select a topic that interests you.

Bored writers make for boring reading. If your instructor has assigned you a topic, then find an aspect of the topic that you care about or are knowledgeable about. Also, be sure your topic is a manageable size. Keeping a positive attitude makes writing, or doing anything for that matter, easier.

3. Start early.

It's all about time on a quarter system. Sometimes having a partner to report and account to helps. The main steps of writing include prewriting, writing, revising, and proofreading. Instead of doing all the steps the night before, break the assignment into manageable tasks. Mark the steps on a calendar and stick to these deadlines. To make writing less painful, give yourself a reward each time you meet a deadline.



4. Spend enough quality time brainstorming or prewriting.

Clear thinking is the first step to good writing. Get your ideas down on paper by writing a brief outline or creating a visual such as a mind map. Then organize your ideas. Chronologically or by order of importance are effective ways to organize.

5. Become familiar with research techniques if you are required to use outside sources.

Visit the library and use the Internet to find experts to validate and support your ideas. Reference librarians can provide assistance. Know the proper way to incorporate these sources in the context of your essay. At the end of your essay, you will need to have a Works Cited page that lists all sources alphabetically. It is important to credit words or thoughts that are not your own to avoid the serious offense of plagiarism.

6. Start writing your rough draft, now that you have an outline as your guide.

Now congratulate yourself because you finished the prewriting step. If you have done it carefully, it is the longest step, but it makes writing your essay much easier. At this point, write to get your ideas down on paper without thinking about grammar and polishing your essay.

7. **Allow yourself ample time to revise your rough draft.**
When you start revising, first look at the general or overall content and organization without thinking about specifics. Revise, revise again, and revise some more.
8. **Spend time proofreading for errors in mechanics and grammar.**
Try reading your essay aloud because your ears are apt to spot places that do not sound right. To eliminate sentence structure errors, start reading backwards, or your last sentence first.
9. **Use available writing resources.**
RIT is fortunate to have a Writing Lab staffed by professional writing instructors who will help with all stages of the writing process. Ask friends or other students to read over your essay. Be sure to use electronic devices, such as a spell checker and a grammar checker. For a valuable Online Writing Lab site, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.
10. **Last, take pride in your completed essay.**
The essay has your name and represents the quality of your work. Appearance matters. Professors are wise to extra large margins and fonts. The process of writing is similar to playing sports, and the best way to improve is to practice, practice, practice.

Writing is a process that requires time and thought.

Questions?

Contact Andrew Perry in
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Mondays: 9:00am-7:00pm
Tuesdays: 9:00am-7:00pm
Wednesdays: 9:00am-7:00pm
Thursdays: 9:00am-7:00pm
Fridays: 9:00am-3:00pm