Writing a Paper

Don’t know how to get started on your next paper? Check out these tips below!

Pre-Writing Tips

- Determine what type of paper you are writing (persuasive, research, informative, etc.)
- Determine what you want to focus your paper on.
- Determine who the audience is and what you want to convey to them.
- How much do you already know about the topic?
- Look at the rubric, or ask your instructor, to determine how many outside sources you need to use in the paper.

Writing the Actual Paper

- Begin your process by identifying the topic you want to focus on. This will become your thesis statement.
- ALWAYS make sure you provide your reader(s) with a thesis statement. A thesis statement addresses the main topic you will be focusing on during your paper. A strong thesis typically answers what, how, and why.
- Find research, quotes, and other evidence that support your thesis. TIP: If you are writing a compare and contrast paper, make sure you find enough evidence to justify both sides before taking your personal stance.
- Write your first draft. It doesn’t have to be perfect, but this is the best way to get your ideas on paper. A good first draft addresses the papers requirements and is about ¾ of the way to your actual completion.
- Take a break!! Walk away from your paper for 15-20 minutes.
- Edit your first draft and insert more information so it is like a final draft.
- Edit the paper. Make sure you utilize resources such as the Writing Center to have other people look at it.
- Double and triple check that you have completed everything the rubric asks for!

Tips on Research

- The more credible sources you have, the better
- For academic journals and scholarly sources, utilize the free online database provided by the University of Iowa Libraries. There are thousands of articles to look at and hundreds of databases! http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/
- For any sources from general web searches, cross check the information on other sites you trust before using to validate the content.

Other Writing Tips

Avoiding plagiarism: if you copy exactly more than two words in a row from a text without a citation, it is considered plagiarism. The University of Iowa has a strict policy on plagiarism,
which may result in you receiving a failing grade. To make sure you avoid plagiarism, correctly cite all of your sources.

**Writing in MLA format:** check out the Purdue Online Writing Lab that provides information on how to use in-text citations, format quotations, and create a works cited utilizing books, websites, research journals, and more https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

**Writing in APA format:** check out the Purdue Online Writing Lab that provides information on how to use in-text citations, format quotations, and create a works cited utilizing books, websites, research journals, and more https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

**Paper Writing Checklist**

Before submitting your final paper, use this checklist to make sure you have all important parts of the paper covered.

**Introduction**
- Is your thesis clearly stated?
- Does your thesis statement address the assigned topic?
- Have you successfully introduced the reader to the topic you will be discussing, or provided background information?

**Body**
- Is the main idea of each paragraph clearly stated?
- Does the evidence you have provided support your argument?
- Did you use correct in-text citations?
- Did you relate the paragraph back to the main topic?

**Conclusion**
- Did you summarize your argument?
- Have you restated your thesis?
- Does your conclusion flow with the rest of your paper?
- Is the language throughout your paper formal?

**Practice:** In the space below, complete the pre-writing steps with the following prompt- IN your opinion, who is the most influential Iowan of all time and why?

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