

# 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  $\frac{3}{4}$  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 lowan of all time and why?*

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