

The Stages of Writing

Having trouble figuring out how to write a paper? Don't know where to start? Don't know what to do next? Here is one outline that might help you on your writing journey!

Brainstorming Stage

This is where you are if you have no idea where to start with a paper.

1. Look at all of the requirements for the paper. What is the page length? What is the topic? Is it argumentative or informative? Write everything down or highlight these so you do not forget them.
 - One common tip that I give out to students is to double the amount of pages for the paragraph amount needed! If you need a 3 page paper, that is roughly 5-6 paragraphs. If you need a 5 page paper, that is roughly 8-10 paragraphs. It just depends on how much you write!
2. Choose a topic you are interested in.
 - If you are having trouble, start by listing ideas, mind map key words, or free-write for 3 minutes.
3. The next part is to start researching. How many sources do you need? Are there enough academic articles to support your ideas, or do you need to switch gears? If you are finding a lot of research, then you might have found your idea!



Pre-Writing Stage

This is where you go next if you have an idea, but have no idea what to do with it.

1. This is where you start to organize your information or make an outline of your ideas. Where do you want to talk about certain items? How do you want your paper to flow? Find an outline template!
2. After your ideas are organized, next is your research.
 - The first step is to make a Works Cited page for all of your sources you want to use.
 - Next, start organizing your research into your outline. Put an in-text citation next to all of your research, no matter if you end up using it or not. This way, you know exactly where you got each piece of information without the struggle of finding it again. The more research and quotations, the better right now. This way you have a bunch of things you may not have to use later.



Writing Stage

You have your outline. You have your research. You have your Works Cited page. Everything is organized, and now it's time to start writing.

1. Start putting your ideas from the outline into sentences.
2. Make sure you are introducing any quotes; no fragments allowed here!
3. If you need help with motivation, see other posts!

Revising Stage

You have your first draft, here is what to do next!

1. Read your paper out loud. This is the best way you catch grammar or sentence structure errors. Find a study room or a quiet place so you have the confidence to read your work!
 - A common tip I give to students is to act like you are reading a speech at the presidential inauguration. This way, your voice sounds more professional and mistakes or confusion in a sentence can be caught easily.
2. Check your paper for common grammar and spelling mistakes.
 - Check for contractions and words like I, we, our, and my; these are too informal and should not be used in an academic paper!
 - Check for words like they're, there, and their. Get them right!
3. Check your format and citations. Are they correct? MLA, APA, or Chicago? Is your main spacing, font, and headers correct? Do you have page numbers for your in text citations if they have them?
4. Ask someone! You can either ask your roommate or make an appointment at the Writing Center. A fresh pair of eyes is another way to reduce mistakes.

Final Stage (The Best Part)

You have your final revision, now what?

1. Turn it in!
2. Enjoy a job well done, and get ready to do it all again next week :)

