

Schedule for Writing a Paper

Break the larger assignment into a series of smaller steps in order to space out the work. Assign yourself a “Target Date” for each step to plan when you will have that part of the process completed. It might help to work backwards from the due date and think about how much time you will need to accomplish each task. Use a calendar (or Semester on a Page) to factor in other commitments.

Today’s Date: _____ Due Date: _____ Days Between: _____

1) The Assignment:

Target Date: Today

Make sure you know what you are being asked to do. **This is incredibly important. Any issues here will drastically impact your grade.** Identify all pieces of the assignment and build a checklist here. If you are at all unsure, ask your professor for clarification.

2) Topic:

Target Date: _____

Start with some general research and narrow your ideas down until you reach a topic that interests you. Make sure it isn’t too large for the assignment. Check for resources to make sure there is enough information available.

3) Research Questions:

Target Date: _____

Create a list of questions for which you will need to find answers. Make sure your questions are open-ended and that they will add to your understanding of your topic.

4) Research:

Target Date: _____

Use appropriate resources (make sure they meet your professor’s expectations) to find answers to your research questions. Don’t be afraid to add new research questions as you gather information and discover that you need even more. Make sure your questions cover all pieces of your assignment checklist (Step 1). **Carefully record your source information for any information that you might use in your paper.**

5) Thesis: Target Date: _____

Consider your research and understanding of your topic as a whole, and then write a working draft of your thesis statement. Make sure it addresses the key components of the assignment. You might change this thesis as you write your paper, but having it will help keep you focused.

6) Organization: Target Date: _____

Sort your research notes into broad categories of information, and use these as the subjects within your paper. You might create an outline, a semantic web, or another organization tool. Carefully consider the order in which you place your subjects. Time spent on this stage will greatly facilitate the actual writing process. Look for areas that could be strengthened with a little more research.

7) Rough Draft: Target Date: _____

Follow your outline, and make this draft as strong as you can. It is easier and more effective to revise a well-written draft than to entirely re-write a poor one. Similarly, make sure to include appropriate source citations as you write. It will take more time to go back and add them in after the fact. Double-space your draft so that you can write between the lines.

8) Conference: Target Date: _____

Have someone take a look at your draft and give you feedback. It's much easier for someone else to find areas of need in your paper than for you to do it yourself. Make an appointment at the Writing Center to have a consultant help with this. Be willing and able to make significant changes based on this conference.

9) Revision: Target Date: _____

Use the suggestions and questions from the conference to improve your paper. This should go beyond mere editing, probably including rewriting sections of your draft. This step can have a significant impact on the grade you receive, make the most of it. If you have time, repeat steps 8 and 9 at least once.

10) Finishing Touches: Target Date: _____

Give yourself some time to check your formatting (including source citation) and other details. Don't wait until five minutes before class to print it out, just in case you have a printer malfunction.