SEVEN DAYS TO A GOOD PAPER

Day #1: Pick a topic.

- What are you interested in?
- What do you question?
- What do you agree with?
- What do you want to know more about?
- What do you need to positively or negatively?

Day #2: Brainstorm

- Try free-writing. Put a time limit and write whatever comes into your mind. Don't worry about grammar or word choice—just write.
- Try narrowing. Look at the free writing and find connecting ideas to narrow down to your topic.
- Try listing ideas relevant to your topic.

Day #3: Write a working thesis statement.

Find the points in your BRAINSTORM you want to emphasize. What are the most important, relevant, new, exciting, or insightful ideas?

Jot down a sentence that incorporates all these points into a single idea. This will be your working thesis. Don't worry— you can change it as you begin to write.

- Ask yourself: Is my thesis interesting? Is it specific enough for the essay length? Does it make a provable claim about my topic?

Day #4: Write a draft.

- Look at everything you have written. Use your working thesis, your main points, and your brainstorming notes to shape a draft.
- Just get your ideas on paper in the form of paragraphs and sentences.
- Don't worry about perfecting anything now.

Day #5: Take a break

- Recharge.

Day #6: Redraft

- Read your draft aloud.
- Did you say what you wanted to, what you thought you said? Is it clearly stated?
- Does the reader ever have to make connections between points on her own?
- Are your conversational sentences easy to follow?
- Is your organization logical?
- Does the essay follow your thesis? Does your thesis follow your essay?

Day #7: Fine tune

- Check paragraphing: Are your transitions logical? Does the organization prove your thesis effectively?
- Check sentences for fragmenes. Try to use varied sentences—length and structure.
- Check passive voice; only use it when absolutely necessary. The reader wants to know who is doing what, not what is being done.
- Check grammar, word choice, punctuation, and spelling. Don't rely solely on spellcheck—read your paper for errors!
- Use "thesis language," the same terms you use in the thesis, throughout the paper, especially in topic sentences and conclusions.

Back to work now!