

SEVEN DAYS TO A GOOD PAPER

No. 2 in the Writing Center Handbook Series

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 react to, positively or negatively?

Follow the arrows to a good paper!

Day #2: Brainstorm

- * Try free-writing. Set a time limit and write whatever comes into your mind. Don't worry about grammar or word choice - just write.
- * Try narrowing. Look at your free writing and find connecting or central ideas and freewrite on those.
- * Try listing ideas relevant to your topic.

Day #7: Fine tune.

- * Check paragraphing. Are your transitions logical? Does the organization prove your thesis effectively?
- * Check sentences for fragments. Try to use varied sentences - in 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.

Day #6: Redraft.

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

Day #3: Write a working thesis statement.

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

Jot down a sentence that incorporates all those 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?

Back to work now!

Day #5: Take a break!

Day #5: CELEBRATE

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.