

Seven Days to a Good Paper

1 Pick a Topic

- What are you interested in?
- What do you question?
- What do you agree or disagree with?
- What do you want to know more about?
- What do you react to, positively or negatively?
- Make a list, draw diagrams, or try to make a map of your ideas.

2 Brainstorm

- Try free-writing. Set a time limit and write whatever comes to mind. Don't edit — just write.
- Try narrowing what you have written. Find connections or big ideas in your writing and freewrite on those.
- Look at quotes in the text that interest or intrigue you, and write about them.

3 Write a Working Thesis

- Find the points in your **brainstorm** you want to explore or emphasize. What relationships or patterns interest or intrigue you? What can you prove to the reader?
- Try to say in one sentence what your paper will be about or will try to prove. You can always change it.
- Ask yourself:
 - Is my thesis specific?
 - Does it make a provable claim about my topic, or does it tell the reader something about the text they already know?

4 Fine Tune

- Check your paragraphs. Are your transitions logical? Does the organization effectively prove your thesis?
- Use the same terms you use in the thesis throughout the paper, especially in topic sentences and conclusions.
- Look for unwieldy sentences and sentence fragments. Try to use varied sentence length and structure.
- Check for passive voice; only use it when necessary.
- Check grammar, punctuation, word choice, and spelling. Don't rely solely on spellcheck — read your paper aloud for errors.

talk to a
writing center tutor at any stage of
this process.
and don't
forget, you can talk to your
professor, too.

these two steps are
interchangeable!
if you can't think of a
thesis, just start writing
your points...then see if
you can sum the
relationship(s) among them
up in one sentence.

6 Revise, Rewrite, Repeat

- Read your draft aloud and ask yourself:
- Did I say what I wanted? Am I saying what I think I'm saying? Is it clearly stated?
 - Does my reader have to make connections between points or quotations on her own?
 - Are my complicated sentences easy to follow?
 - Is my organization logical?
 - Does the essay follow my thesis, and vice versa? Do I need to change the wording of my thesis, or should I provide more explanation about how my points support my thesis?

5 Take a break!

7 Write a Draft

- Look at everything you have written. Use your thesis as a guide, but don't feel bound to it. Try to write a paragraph or two to develop each point.
- Don't worry about editing or revising; just try to write your ideas down in sentences and paragraphs.
- As you write each paragraph, try to think about how it relates to your thesis, and explain it.
- Use quotes as placeholders. If you can't quite explain the quote yet, just write it and go back to it later.