

How to Get Started Writing

- If you're struggling to start a writing project, you're not alone—it happens to everyone. We all write differently, so pick and choose the strategies in this video that inspire you.
- Close-read the prompt. Often, prompts contain keywords that suggest how to structure your paper.
- Sometimes you might need to get more information or refresh what you already know before you write.
 - Use the bibliographies of sources you already have as a springboard for research, and look for scholarly debates you can take a side in.
 - While you're reading, jot down any reactions or observations on sticky notes or in a journal. This gives you lots of ideas and scraps of evidence to work with later.
 - Review your notes and the readings and look for what intrigues you or spurs your thinking.
- Make a big list of everything related to your topic that you can think of: facts, ideas, sentence fragments, questions, quotes, et cetera.
- Set a timer and jot down any thoughts that cross through your head, without stopping. It might feel silly, but it can help quiet self-doubt and unlock your ideas.
- Jot down whatever ideas you have and draw the relationships between them. You can also write your ideas on index cards and arrange them for a more active version.
- Ask yourself questions about your project. These are just a few examples, but you can find more in the links below.
- You can also try “cubing,” or writing about your topic with six different prompts. Then look for any interesting perspectives-that come up.
- Try explaining what your course is about, or the topic of your paper, to a friend. Speaking can help us process and clarify our thoughts.
- Try comparing your topic to something, or explaining it as an analogy, to get a new understanding of it.
- Thanks for watching, and check out the links below for more information.

Read the Prompt (Even if it's Long)

- It's difficult to start writing when you're given a confusing assignment. Check out these tips for figuring out a prompt.
- Read the prompt all the way through. If you do this early on, you can start digesting the assignment and generating ideas.
- It helps to know your goal before you start, so consider what you might learn from the assignment, and how it fits into your course.
- Break the assignment down into parts so you can identify exactly what you need to do.
 - Many assignments start with an "overview" section, which sets up the topic with background information.
 - Usually, there are also one or two sentences that tell you what your paper should be about.
 - Many prompts include questions and suggestions to get your thinking started. But this is separate from the main prompt—you don't have to address everything in this section.
 - Your prompt might also have a section that gives you structure and style instructions, such as "be concise" or "use a thesis and evidence."
 - Finally, the "details" section tells you all the important details about format, due date, and length.
- While reading the prompt, you can also look for keywords that tell you what to do.
 - Some assignments just want you to summarize information you've learned.
 - Others might ask you to make connections between ideas or texts.
 - A prompt might also want you to come up with and support your own idea or interpretation. This is common in college writing assignments, but sometimes it isn't directly stated.
- As you read, think about how you can design the paper to address the prompt. For example, you could make different sections to answer different parts of the question.
- Use the recommended length as a clue to how extensive your paper needs to be.
- After reading the prompt, make sure you understand it by explaining it out loud.
- Finally, ask your professors if you have questions—they are usually very happy to answer them.

Structuring Your Academic Essay

- What is an academic paper supposed to look like? Sometimes this isn't clear. Keep watching for a basic overview.
- In general, it's expected that you state and prove an argument. The argument is the center point, the purpose, of many academic papers.
- Most papers also have a three-part structure: an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- Let's start with introductions.
 - Intros have two main goals. They should "hook" the reader's interest, and describe your topic.
 - Here are some more specific suggestions for what you can include in your introduction.
- The thesis statement is a main expectation of academic writing.
 - The thesis states the argument or main point that you prove in your paper.
 - Theses vary widely, but often, they argue for an interpretation of something, describe "how" or "why" something happened, or take a stand on an issue.
 - The thesis is usually stated in one or a few sentences, and is located at the end of the introduction.
- Body Paragraphs are the next part of the paper.
 - Their goal is to prove your argument, your thesis. Think of them as small units that add up to your bigger point.
 - Begin with a topic sentence, which states the argument for the paragraph, and relates it back to the thesis.
 - Next, provide evidence. What counts as evidence varies by discipline, but these are some examples.
 - Evidence should be followed by analysis. Explain why and how the evidence supports your argument.
 - You can repeat the evidence-analysis cycle as many times as you want to complete your paragraph.
 - Remember that in general, each paragraph should have one, centralized main idea.
- Let's talk a bit about flow.
 - Signposting is when you tell the reader what you are doing. This can be extremely helpful in an academic paper.
 - To orient your reader from the start, consider providing a "road map" to the paper in your thesis, or in a separate sentence in your introduction.
 - Use section headings, or write a short paragraph at the beginning of each section explaining what it's about.
 - Use transition sentences or phrases at the beginnings and ends of paragraphs.
 - Within paragraphs, use repetition, transition words, and pronouns to show how sentences connect to each other.
- The last section of the paper is the conclusion.
 - Conclusions have two goals: summarizing what you've said, and expressing the larger importance of your ideas.
 - Here are some ideas for the "so what" part of the conclusion.
- A quick note about structuring longer papers.

- You can expand the basic structure; for example, the introduction may have several paragraphs, not just one.
- Try dividing the body paragraphs into groups and forming sections to organize the paper.
- You can also add different kinds of paragraphs besides the argumentative body paragraphs discussed earlier.
- Finally, keep in mind that this is just one way of writing—it's not the only way, and it's not the best way. And it takes everyone practice to get the hang of it.

Beyond Editing: What is Revision?

- Revision is an important step in the writing process. Keep watching for revision strategies.
- First of all, what actually is revision? There are three stages to it.
 - Stage one involves looking at the big picture: the structure and argument of your paper. You might move paragraphs, rewrite your thesis, or add analysis.
 - Stage two involves more stylistic concerns, like flow and tone.
 - Stage three involves the fine details: the citations, formatting, spelling, and grammar.
- A good first step in revision is to make sure your paper has everything it needs. Check for these elements—or whatever is required for your specific assignment.
- Next, ask yourself questions about each part in your paper to ensure it's strong. Find more in the links below.
- Check in on your thesis. Sometimes, you don't figure out exactly what you want your thesis to be until the revision stage.
 - Try summarizing what your paper argues out loud and comparing to the thesis you wrote. Or check if you wrote a thesis-like sentence in your conclusion.
- Make a “reverse outline.” You can do this in several ways. One is to summarize each paragraph using the comments feature.
 - You can also make a separate document, and condense your paper into outline form.
 - However you do it, a reverse outline can help you see your paper zoomed-out, and it's easier to check if paragraphs relate to each other and the thesis.
- Color-code the arguments, evidence, and analysis in each paragraph to ensure you have a good balance.
- Find a friend or writing tutor and talk them through your paper. Have them ask questions and push back on your arguments. This can reveal areas for improvement.
- Print the paper out, cut out the paragraphs, and experiment with different rearrangements.
- Try turning your paper into a Google Slides presentation to help you think about what the different parts and main ideas are.
- Read the paper out loud to yourself—this can help you get a feel for sentence structure and flow.
- Sometimes you might have to cut bits of writing you really like. This can be hard. Try saving your clippings in a document to make revision a little easier.

How to Grow as a Writer

- Have you ever wondered how to grow as a writer? Here are some tips to get you started.
- Read often and widely. Reading expands your repertoire of words, structures, and tones, which can fuel your writing.
- Remember that it's OK to struggle—even the most experienced writers do. You can still think of yourself as a writer and have a hard time writing.
- Similarly, write even when you don't feel like it. It's great to feel inspired, but it's also important not to let that limit you. Set a schedule.
- Reread your past writing. Appreciate what you did well, and look for how you might revise now. Reread any feedback you received too.
- Try out different kinds of writing. Lean into different voices—have fun experimenting with your style and finding out what works for you and what doesn't.
- Use writing to process your thoughts. If you have a complex problem you want to work out, or a lot of content to parse through, try writing it out.
- Make a habit of jotting down all the ideas you have about a writing project, even if they're just partially-formed thoughts.
- Keep a notebook with you, because sometimes you get the best ideas when you take a break from writing.
- Talk to others about writing. Share your experiences, get advice, and get feedback. Try giving feedback too—this can help you improve your own writing.
- Write over a lifetime. After college you might have more time to engage in non-academic writing. Lean into that. Writing helps us develop our thoughts, process our feelings, and communicate with ourselves and others.

Cultivating Good Writing Habits

- This video is about everyday habits that can help you complete long writing projects or even shorter ones like job applications or papers.
- Make your space work for you. Put up decorations, turn on music, and find other ways to make your study space a place you enjoy spending time.
- Create a writing routine, such as sitting in the same chair or using the same pen whenever you write. This can help you transition more smoothly into work mode.
- If you find that writing makes you feel nervous or overwhelmed, do a calming activity before you start, like taking a short walk or watching a favorite video.
- Schedule consistent writing time for yourself. Look at your weekly schedule and block it out—you can even try blocking the same time each day for writing.
- Then follow through with it—write at these times even if it feels challenging.
- Break up larger tasks into smaller ones. For example, you could set a goal of writing one page of your paper every day.
- Then reward yourself each time you finish one of these small goals—you could eat pizza, go for a run, anything that you enjoy.
- Write with others. Setting goals and planning writing time together can help keep you accountable and provide emotional support.
- Ask for feedback on your work and get in the habit of engaging with it.
- Although it can be easier said than done, take good care of yourself physically and mentally. Check in with yourself while you're writing, and take a break if you need to.

Working Through Writers' Block

- If you've got writers' block, and you're not sure what to do, here are some quick strategies you can use.
- If you're struggling to get started, try reviewing your sources. Look for themes, intriguing ideas, or arguments you disagree with. These can be jumping-off points for your paper.
- Free writing helps generate ideas.
 - Set a timer for five minutes and write without stopping. Jot down whatever thoughts pass through your head. If it helps, turn your screen off so you aren't tempted to edit as you go.
- Make a concept map to get your ideas organized. Write down each idea, draw a circle around it, and try to connect the bubbles.
- Start with whatever part of the paper feels manageable to you—don't feel pressured to start at the beginning
- Write anything, even if you feel uninspired, or are afraid that it won't come out well.
 - The act of writing can help you develop your ideas and come up with new ones, so experimentation and messiness are okay.
 - Use filler words if that helps you get your ideas out. Highlight areas you'd like to revise later so you can move on and keep writing.
- Get rid of any distractions in your environment.
 - Set your device in airplane mode if you're tempted to check social media.
 - Or set yourself a goal of focusing on writing for short periods.
- Take a break and let your ideas percolate—you might have a better sense of what you want to say when you sit down again.
- Finally, cut yourself some slack. Writing can be challenging, and it's an ongoing learning process for all of us.