

SELF-REFLECTION

Answer these questions. Are you happy with your answers, or would you like to make some changes?

- What do you find most interesting about your topic?
- As you read, ask yourself: "How do I feel about this?" and "What do I want to say about this?"
- Do you think about how you can best present the information to make the biggest impact on your readers?
- What sources are you using? Are they credible and peer-reviewed?
- Do you write an entire first draft without stopping just to get your ideas on paper? Or do you write from an outline, creating each sentence slowly and methodically?
- Do you ever ask for feedback from a writing tutor or a friend who has good writing skills?

TIPS

- Plan ahead and allow plenty of time for every writing assignment.
- Approach writing as a process with several steps. Don't expect to complete a paper in just a few hours.
- Use your assignment guidelines to inform your research and organization so you won't miss any key information.
- Read other academic writing. Textbooks and journal articles offer excellent models on effective organization, introductions and conclusions, and use of quotes.
- Try different brainstorming techniques such as mapping, freewriting, or questioning.
- Create an outline for your work to help you focus your writing and stay on track.
- Wait a day before you start revising your first draft. After a sleep, your mind will be detached from the writing enough to look at it with a clear, critical eye.

Writing Strategies



The Writing Process

Analyze the assignment:

- Why did your instructor give you this assignment? How does it link to your course material?
- What's the purpose of the assignment: to explain, analyze, compare, evaluate, etc.? Look for those key verbs!
- Who is your audience?
- What kind of evidence do you need?

Plan:

- Schedule time for research and planning.
- Get comfortable and remove distractions.
- Keep track of your sources.
- Take notes as you read.
- Try different brainstorming techniques to generate ideas.
- Create an outline that includes a working thesis and your main points.
- Don't worry if your thesis changes over time. Right now, it only serves to help guide your thoughts/research.

Draft:

- Create sections for your work (and place paragraphs into these sections).
- Use the assignment guidelines to help organize your paper. Did you give enough attention to the heavily weighted areas?
- Keep writing! Don't stop to edit. (This step comes later.)
- Ask for feedback on your draft. If your reader is confused, it may mean your organization is weak or you haven't fully explained a point or position.

Revise:

- Review your assignment again. Does your paper fulfill all the requirements?
- Test your thesis statement. It should be a significant, single, specific, and supportable statement.
- Determine whether each paragraph contains one main idea that directly supports your thesis statement.
- Add transitions to create flow between paragraphs/new ideas.

Edit:

- Be sure each paragraph has a specific and supportable topic sentence.
- Incorporate appropriate and convincing evidence to support your topic sentence (and cite your sources!).
- Eliminate unnecessary words, awkward phrases, and redundancies.
- Use varied sentence structure.

Proofread:

- Finish your paper well in advance so you have time to correct typos, spelling errors, incorrect punctuation, etc.
- Print your paper. You'll catch more errors than when you try to proofread on a computer screen or other electronic device.
- Start at the end of your paper, and read it one sentence at a time.
- Slowly read your paper out loud.