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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **14 Tips to Improve Your Essay Writing** | | | http://www.essaystart.com/images/transparent.gif | | |  |  | |  | 1. **Start early! Give yourself at least two weeks to prepare an assignment.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Read your assignment sheet carefully. Analyze the language of the assignment and its keywords (see below). What's the purpose behind the essay? Who is your audience? If you're unsure about the language of the assignment, its purpose, or your audience, seek help. Talk to your professor, your T.A., or an instructor at the Writing Center.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Pre-write before you write. There are several different tools writers use to generate ideas before they begin to write: free-writing, perception games, brainstorming and clustering, discussion groups, heuristics, talking with friends. These activities can help you get ideas on paper and give you some initial guidance, making it much easier to write your first draft. Our handout "Getting Started" describes these activities and more.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **If you're writing a research paper, do your readings. They will help you determine how to think about your subject and what special terms you need to use in your essay. Readings give you the expert opinions that you will incorporate in your essay to prove your argument.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Write out a working thesis (a preliminary main idea) or a question you plan to answer. Don't worry if you’re working thesis changes as you write and research - it's supposed to. Remember that a thesis statement is not simply a statement of fact but a statement saying something about a fact.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Before writing the rough draft, consider creating an outline of what you're going to say or prove in your paper. Make sure you can show in the outline how each point you want to make connects to your thesis. Remember that the outline, like the working thesis, can change as you go along. If a point doesn't seem to fit, reexamine the point, and reexamine your thesis. It may be possible or even necessary to either change the point or change the thesis.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **When you begin to write, you don't have to start at the beginning. Start with the section that is clearest in your mind. Then go back and fill in the gaps. This is only a draft. You can worry about the connections between arguments once you have something on paper.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Write your first draft without worrying too much about grammar, punctuation, and style. These things are important but shouldn't be allowed to distract you from writing your ideas down on paper. Don't try to write the perfect introduction, either. Many writers write their introduction at the end of the writing process.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Make sure your argument reaches a conclusion. In the conclusion, you should tell the reader what the highlights of the essay are and what the reader can learn from this essay.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Always rewrite your rough draft at least once. Read your draft and write the main idea of each paragraph in the margin of your essay. There should be only one main idea in each paragraph, and the main ideas of each paragraph should follow on each other logically, all connecting to your thesis.** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Keep your audience in mind when you're rewriting. Write the essay as if the reader were reading over your shoulder and constantly asking you, "What does this mean?", "How does this idea or paragraph link to the last one?"** | |  |  | |  | 1. **If you're citing sources, check your documentation style. Know what documentation style your professor expects. Three main styles are used in the Humanities and Social Sciences: APA, MLA, and Turabian (Chicago).** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Always revise your work before submitting it. Delete anything in the essay that does not relate to your main argument. Do you use transition? Are your introduction and conclusions more than summaries? Did you find every single grammatical error?** | |  |  | |  | 1. **Finally, before you turn your essay in, when your argument and ideas are clear, read your essay aloud, listening to what you've written. Listen for and correct difficult or awkward phrases, and mistakes in grammar and punctuation.** | |
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