

Steps to Writing a Good Paper

AMERICAN HERITAGE

A few simple steps to help you write quality essays for American Heritage.

Use your TA throughout the writing process! For example, you could discuss potential ideas with your TA, bring an outline to your TA, and bring what you consider to be a final draft to your TA.

It's best if you can go to your own TA for advice on your paper because your TA will be grading it, but if your schedule does not allow for visiting your TA during his/her hours in the Review Room, other TAs will be able to help you out.

You will generally need to get your paper to your TA at least a full week before it is due if you want to get the best feedback. And remember, the TA is not there to do your work for you! Your TA will give you advice, but if you don't take it (or your paper was rough enough at the consultation that your TA could only give you broad advice for improving your paper), then you can't expect your TA visit to be apparent in the grade you receive.

With those ideas in mind, here are a few simple steps that can help you make your writing process a successful one. Recognize that you may not follow these steps in this exact order. Sometimes you will draft, then think again about questions, draft again, re-think arrangement, and then draft again. The process is often more recursive than linear.

1. **Understand.** Analyze the assignment carefully. Understand the purpose, genre, audience, and scope of the paper assigned. Don't hesitate to ask questions.
2. **Start.** Jot down ideas for the paper as soon as it is assigned. Keep lists of ideas as you think of them throughout the time you work on the paper. Make a plan for writing the paper. Don't put off writing until the last minute.
3. **Ask questions.** Do background reading to find good questions to ask. Think of a specific question to answer.
4. **Find answers.** Collect the information needed to answer the question.
5. **Arrange.** Organize your information in a way that logically answers your question.
6. **Draft.** Write a complete draft well before the due date.
7. **Revise.** Read your draft critically. Ask others to read it too, and listen to their advice. Think carefully about how to improve the paper.
8. **Repeat.** Write another draft. Repeat steps 7 and 8 as needed.
9. **Edit.** Once the paper seems finished, proofread it once more to catch any errors.
10. **Submit.** Turn in the paper and rejoice in your good work.

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