

10 Day Timeline

A 10 day essay writing timeline, designed to keep you calm and on-track. This guide is designed for students who have a week or two to write their paper - this is a day-by-day timeline that includes tips and tricks on how to sharpen your writing, meet word count requirements without sounding ridiculous, and finish your paper off strong.

How to use this guide:

Print this guide and follow along each day of the writing process

Use free spaces to write as needed

FREE EXTRA RESOURCES

[Royal Shakespeare Company](#)

[Iowa State University - English Literature Research Guide](#)

[PBS Learning - Literature Resources](#)

[Encyclopedia Britannica - Arts and Culture](#)

[Southern Connecticut University - Open Access to Literature Resources](#)

DAY 1

Getting a lay of the land

Okay, you've been assigned a paper. And you have a decent amount of time to write it, go you. First we want to assess, **have you read the book/text your paper is assigned on?**

1. If **yes**, you already have - then we are going to make sure you have plenty of notes from your class and notes from the text itself, do a wee bit on preliminary research, and then formulate a few potential thesis statements by the end of this day.
2. If **no**, then we want to do as much **preliminary research** on this day. Preliminary research is just a fancy way of saying getting all the background information we can get on the text before we actually open the book. Spend day 1 and 2 doing research, and skimming your book to search for potential things to write about. If your instructor gave you a specific topic to delve into, then you'll research this. Find more about research on day 2.

Here is what's important to know before you open your book:

- When was the text written?
- Why was the text written? (ex: to make a political or social statement, to shock society, to be artful, to praise nature or beauty, to contemplate human nature, to warn about how our failures affect our future, etc)
- What genre of literature does it fall under (ex: Romantic, Gothic, Tragedy)
- How did the text affect society? How was it received by the public?
- Any critical acclaim the author received?
- Major plot points of the text

Can't make sense of your reading assignment? Use one of our Lit 101 Study Guides!

Step 1, Come up with up with 3-5 possible thesis statements for your paper

Here are some sources on what makes a good thesis:

[Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)

[Brandeis University Writing Resources](#)

[Harvard College Writing Center](#)

Next, Write 3 supporting sentences for each potential thesis, if you cannot come up with three, eliminate the thesis as an option

Next, Narrow down to 2 thesis statements

Finally, Choose one you feel you can write most comfortably about while still maintaining a strong argument

DAY 2

Conduct academic research and create outline

Research tips:

- Keep track of what sources you're using in a separate document, create a works cited or bibliography page as you go to save yourself a headache toward the end of the writing process
- Use word search to find articles that are most related to your thesis
 - Ex: *Shakespeare's perspective of women in Elizabethan high-society*
- Want to know if the source is right for you? Consider these three things:
 - Date the article was written, more recent doesn't mean better, but the date an article was written matters especially if you are trying to make an argument that connects the text to modern times
 - Who was the text written by?
 - How easily are you understanding the language, an article isn't very useful if you truly cannot make sense of it. Using the dictionary some or rereading is normal, but if it feels as if the article is written in another language, you won't be able to make many connections from it

Next, build an outline. Flesh out your thesis with your research findings, this becomes the body of your paper. Make 3 points supporting your argument, and write 4-7 sentences on each point.

Use this template:

Thesis:

A few key points for intro

Point 1:

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Point 2:

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Point 3:

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A few key points for conclusion

DAY 3

We begin writing the paper!

Today, write the introduction to your paper

Tips for a strong intro

- Start with facts.
 - Ex: “When first introduced to the public in 1604 *Othello* enthralled audiences with its theme of jealousy, passion, and racial tension.”
- Make thesis clear and immediate, should be the second to third sentence
- State what you will be doing in your paper, for example:
 - “In this paper I will explore the connections between the ruling class in Great Britain during the Elizabethan period and Shakespeare’s use of satire to expose the contradictions of his time .”

DAY 4

Write body paragraphs

Flesh out the first half of your outline, building off the intro you wrote on Day 3

Tips for writing body paragraphs

- Avoid using informal you
- Instead of using “I think” or “it is my belief” make the statement as if it were fact
- Use supporting evidence from your research to support your argument, weave in research and connect to the original point you made in your thesis statement
- Quote the text moderately
- Ensure that you are continuously driving to the point made in your introductory paragraph
- Consider using **ACE** - Answer, Cite, Explain
 - Answer the question - are you pro or against, where do you stand on the argument
 - Cite - use accredited sources such as JSTOR, etc
 - Explain what the evidence signifies and how it related to your point of your point of view on the issue

DAY 5

Write body paragraphs

*Remember to follow ACE from Day 4

Noticing your paper isn't quite long enough? Here is how to meet word count without sounding redundant:

- Use tools like a thesaurus to find synonyms for short, non-descriptive words
- Use longer quotes from the text or research sparingly, 1-3 longer quotes is sufficient and will lengthen your paper, but be sure that you use long quotes wisely and with purpose. The real trick here is to use that long quote to lend an explanation of why it was used. Longer quote, longer connecting text using your own words.
- Connect, connect, connect. See if you can make a few more connecting points that flow well together.
- An example of how to create flow in your paper: "This critic says this - which contradicts or supports what this critic says - in class we spoke of this - but I find this to be true."

That's 4 points that will certainly lengthen your paper!

DAY 6

Finish the rest of paper, including your concluding paragraph

Tips for a strong conclusion

- Leave the reader something to think about
- Include all the points you've previously used
- Tie in how we can learn from the text. Ex: "Even in our postmodern times, *Macbeth* reminds society to be wary of unchecked ambition."

DAY 7

Check for writing errors and edit as needed.

Especially if this is a longer paper you have written, you may need the entire day to comb through and see where adjustments can be made. Sometimes, as we read through, we see that we may have missed a point we meant to make, or the paper doesn't flow.

Not sure what to look out for? Check out [Stanford's Top 20 Errors in Undergraduate Writing](#)

Get a trusted friend or instructor to read what you have so far and take notes on any fallacies they may find. Consider the following:

- How does the paper flow?
- Have you gotten all your points across and do they make sense to the person you are reading to?
- Are you happy with how you finished the paper, does it make the impact you were hoping for?

DAY 8

Complete works cited page

Additionally, use this day for editing or strengthening any weak spots noted from day 8.

Here are some resources from Purdue University's Writing Lab if you are unfamiliar with how to cite resources:

[Purdue OWL MLA guide](#)

[Purdue OWL APA guide](#)

[Purdue OWL Chicago Manual Guide](#)

DAY 9

Do one final read through of your paper.

Tip: read your paper out loud to catch any mistakes

DAY 10

Relax :) you just wrote a kick-ass paper