

WRITING PLACE TIPS FOR WRITERS

Make sure you understand the assignment

Are you expected to argue your own analysis and opinion or simply to report facts and summarize the experts' ideas? Are outside sources required? If so, what kind and how many are appropriate? Ask the professor or TA if you are not certain what is required of you.

Make sure your paper has a main point

A main point gives your paper focus and direction, whether you are writing an analysis, an argument, or a report. Be sure to support your main point with evidence and/or reasoning. Depending on the kind of paper you are writing, evidence can come from texts you are analyzing, from your own primary research, or from authorities in the field. See our pages on developing a Thesis and Testing the Strength of your Thesis for more information.

Begin early so that you have enough time to revise and edit

If you are having trouble beginning, try the following method to get started: Write a list of potential topics and jot down your opinions. Then write for ten minutes on one topic, without stopping or trying to write perfectly. Outline your points.

Write more than one draft

Even if you are in a hurry, leave time to read over your draft before preparing the final version. Reading it aloud can help you find awkward passages. If you have more time, get feedback from others. Having another person read your draft can help you find places where readers will want more information or where your argument is difficult to follow.

Use these questions as guides to revising:

- Does the paper address the professor's assignment?
- Is the main point clear and convincing?
- What does the introduction promise the paper will do?
- Does the paper follow through on that commitment?
- Are the paragraphs arranged in logical order?
- Are the sentences easy to understand?

Avoid accidental plagiarism

Give full credit to your sources whenever you quote, paraphrase, refer to, or borrow other people's ideas. If you are not sure whether to document a point, do it. It's better to over document than to risk a charge of plagiarism. Make sure you cite your references correctly, using the documentation style your professor requires. For more information, see our pages on citation.

Proofread carefully

Use a spelling checker if you write with a word processor. Use a dictionary and a handbook to help you find and correct errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

