Often, the biggest challenge in writing is just getting started. Procrastinators who struggle jumping head first into a task know how stressful their lives can become if they delay too long. This month’s issue discusses tips and strategies writers can use to pursue assignments with confidence and to avoid procrastination.

Get ready to wrrrrite!!!
Before tackling any task, it’s important to be in the right frame of mind. Don’t be afraid to:
- Acknowledge that writing takes effort
  - Stop waiting for “words to flow forth”
- Acknowledge personal problems (e.g., perfectionism and procrastination)
  - But don’t allow them to become excuses

Get rid of the junk!
A cluttered mind and a cluttered desk can create stumbling blocks in the writing process by competing for your brain’s attention. To clear both, consider:
- Doing something physical before writing (e.g., go to the gym, mow your lawn, play a game of tennis)
- Clean your desk—or wherever you typically work—of unneeded books, newspapers, and bills.

Or think about finding a new space, perhaps outside of the home, to write. A quiet spot at a library or coffeehouse might be an option if there are too many distractions, including family members, in the house.

Don’t bite off more than you can chew—at least, not at first
Even if you’ve done everything above, it’s unlikely that you’ll be able to quickly knock out a 10-page paper. In fact, the most disciplined writers generally develop a schedule for their craft. Some prefer early morning because they feel refreshed and creative; others favor the peace and calm of late nights. The key is to figure out what works best for you. If nothing else, plan to:
- Set aside blocks of time
  - 10 minutes isn’t enough for most people
  - For some, 2 hours is the minimum
- Set concrete goals
  - Number of paragraphs, pages, sections you intend to complete
  - Then write beyond that goal—at least a few sentences—to create an easy starting point for the next section of your paper

Writing the first draft
As a writer, you should accept that your first draft will never, ever be your only draft. In fact, during the research process, it’s best to keep an open mind in case you need to revise your outline. Once you’ve
settled on your topic and developed an initial outline, focus on fleshing out the points to help you pull together your first draft.

*Keep in mind that multiple revisions and lots of editing will be necessary before the paper is ready to be submitted.*

- You final draft should have a good flow of information, address all the required elements, and have a strong and persuasive argument
- Polish the final draft for APA style, word choice, and transitions

**Although your final paper must be linear, your writing process does not!**

- Start with sections that are readiest to be written
- Don’t omit citations in your draft
- At a minimum, insert *(cite)* where needed

### How to Write an A+ Paper

Want to impress your instructor? Then follow the tips below!

**Embrace Outlines**

- Identify assignment components
- Help to guide your reading, research
- Help to narrow your focus, keep paper on track
- Physical structure helps you organize and subordinate information

**An outline helps you see the scope of a 12-page paper in a single page**

- Holes in your outline indicate holes in your argument
  - These holes are your next areas to research and fill in
- Outline headers = headers for paper = reveal organization to the reader

A **reverse outline** near the final draft of the paper can ensure you’ve covered all the necessary topics

- Use instructor’s rubric as checklist for paper

---

**Need Writing Assistance?**

**Susan and Diane are here to help!**

Contact the Writing Support Team via e-mail: soswwritingsupport@gmail.com