

## TIPS FOR WRITING A (GOOD) UNIVERSITY PAPER

### 1. UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT.

It's simple: you won't do well if you don't meet your instructor's expectations. These expectations should be clearly explained on the assignment sheet. Read it carefully. Then, if you still have questions, ask your instructor for clarification.

### 2. BE PREPARED.

A good paper requires preparation! Make sure you're up to date with the required reading for the course—you will probably be expected to draw upon it in your paper. If you're writing a research paper, give yourself lots of time to find sources, read them carefully, and turn them over in your mind. Don't just go to the stacks the night before the paper is due and grab books at random.

### 3. MAKE AN OUTLINE.

Don't just start writing and hope for the best. Spend some time thinking about the assignment, your topic, the argument you want to make, and the information that you want to include. Then map out your paper. More detailed is better, but even a rough outline will help to keep you on track.

### 4. HAVE A POINT.

If the instructor gets to the end of your paper and thinks "What was their point?" you're probably in trouble. Every paper should have a *thesis statement* that clearly defines the topic of your paper and the specific argument that you're going to make about that topic.

### 5. STAY FOCUSED.

You have a point—now stick to it. Make sure that each paragraph contributes to your argument. Explicitly link the evidence you present to the idea(s) in your thesis statement. Don't get sidetracked by interesting but not-quite-relevant topics.

### 6. DON'T PLAGIARIZE.

Even the most honest students sometimes plagiarize "by mistake" due to carelessness or ignorance of the rules for citing others' work. Keep careful track of where you get all of your information from, so you can separate your own thoughts from the ideas of others. If you're not familiar with how to cite references, ask somebody or look it up.

### 7. WRITE MORE THAN ONE DRAFT.

If you've got the time, it's always a good idea to write a second (or even third) draft of your paper. After you write a first draft, ask questions like: Did I fulfill the requirements of the assignment? Is my argument clearly stated? Is my paper well organized, and organized in a way that helps me make my argument?

### 8. HAVE SOMEONE PROOFREAD FOR YOU.

Typos can taint an otherwise great paper, and in some cases can make your meaning unclear. Ask a sharp-eyed friend to read your paper and look for punctuation, spelling and grammar mistakes.