

WRITING TRIAGE

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE THREE DAYS . . . OR LESS

DON'T PANIC.

MAD TIPS!

Don't try to 'sound smart'. Using a word to lengthen a paper or to enhance the voice just makes it more confusing.

Go for simplicity over word count every time.

Clear writing should include active verbs and simple subjects.

Don't think your argument has to be complicated to be good. Staying true to your topic, research and thoughts will suffice.

Keep organized!

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"PATIENCE IS THE CALM ACCEPTANCE THAT THINGS CAN HAPPEN IN A DIFFERENT ORDER THAN THE ONE YOU HAVE IN MIND."

— DAVID G. ALLEN

WHAT TO DO IN 6 STEPS

1. IDENTIFY WHAT KIND OF WRITING

A paper? An artist statement? A critical response? Read the assignment sheet and highlight important details. Look for keywords like: Discuss, Propose, Identify, Summarize, Contrast, Relate, Compare. Use them to figure out what your instructor wants you to do. Make a shortlist of these things.

2. FIGURE OUT YOUR TIMELINE

What is happening between now and when the paper is due? Are there pockets of time that could be put to work? ie. Completing a reading on a bus ride/commute? Does this need to be done in the next six hours? What do you need to make that time valuable? Food, drink? A quiet place to write? Attain these necessary things and make the most of the time you have.

3. MAKE A PLAN

Break down the time you have into manageable chunks where you can work on different parts of the assignment. Follow a logical balanced order, Research and idea generating first, drafting next, editing/revising last. Create breaks for yourself in between each step, even if they are tiny.

4. ORGANIZE

Whether you like to begin essays with a free write, or you lay out carefully structured outlines, ensure you spend some time before writing to organizing the structure of the final written product. Check in with your assignment sheet shortlist, is the writing you are planning hitting all the requirements? Organizing in this way keeps the bigger picture in mind, and helps ensure major requirements are fulfilled.

5. STICK WITH THE PLAN

Even when you're stuck. Set a timer if it helps you follow through and keep on schedule. Write/read through the pain. If one part gets tricky go somewhere else in the reading/writing and then come back to it. If things get really bad go for a short walk, or make tea. Come back. Keep Going.

6. ALWAYS LEAVE TIME TO EDIT

Papers are written in the edits. Somebody said that and it's absolutely true. I'll figure out who. But it's true.

AT ANY STAGE...

Ask for help! Your nearest Writing Centre is the place to go, but should that be unavailable, ask your friends, teachers, neighbours! Sometimes seeing an example of a similar paper, discussing the assignment with a classmate or a friend, or even reading it out loud to your cat can help alleviate the pressure of writing it alone, and call attention to what direction the paper should go in!