



Writing is challenging. Whether you're searching for a topic, struggling through writer's block, or getting the words just right, each stage of the writing process is dynamic and, at times, demanding. Writing a paper can be intimidating, especially when you first sit down to start. But fear not! Here are some tips to help you survive the writing process and conquer your assignments with confidence.

How to Read an Assignment

- Underline all verbs (list, explain, compare), and be sure your answer does what the assignment says to do.
- Underline all numbers (give three reasons, compare all five).
- Rewrite the assignment into your own words so you know you understand it.
- Break your answer into pieces by outlining.
- Try some prewriting activities (brainstorming, freewriting) before trying to answer the question.
- After you've written your answer, reread the assignment question to be sure you've included everything.

How to Get Started

- **Focused brainstorming**

Write the idea on the top of the page. For five minutes, list everything that comes to mind about the topic.

- **Freewriting**

Write the idea on the top of the page. Without worrying about spelling or grammar, write in sentence-like form everything that comes to mind about the topic. Questions are useful too.

- **Mapping**

Write the idea in the center of the page. As thoughts come to you, make different branches of ideas from the center. When a branch "dies," go back to the center and form a new branch.

- **Conversation**

Talk with a classmate, friend, or CWC consultant about the issue you'll be writing about. Listen to their thoughts and questions.

How to Find a Thesis

- **Complete the following:**

In this essay I plan to _____ for an audience of _____ that _____ because/if _____

- (1.) _____,
(2.) _____, and
(3.) _____.

How to Research in the Library

- Connect with the Diamond Library at <http://library.unh.edu>
- Go to the Library and ask the librarians for assistance. They are a great help!

How to Avoid Plagiarism

You plagiarize:

- If you copy word-for-word without quoting or citing (citing alone isn't sufficient).
- If you substitute some of the words of the source with your own and keep the source's sentence structure.
- If you misquote or record incorrect information.
- If you buy, steal, or otherwise procure and submit a paper which you did not write for the course you're currently in.
- If you use ideas that are not your own and submit them as your own.

How to Revise

- Have someone else read your assignment, and then your paper, and write down a few comments and questions. Then have a conversation about the paper.
- Check to see that, overall, the writing addresses the question of the assignment.
- Make sure each paragraph centers on a separate idea, and that all sentences within it relate to that idea.
- Make sure every claim you make (thesis, opinion) is supported by solid evidence that is clearly explained.

How to Edit

- Use spellchecker and grammar checker capabilities on your word processor.
- Have someone competent at editing show you the kinds of errors you make consistently and ways you can use handbooks to avoid them.

Resource: Connors, Robert and Andrea A. Lunsford. *The St. Martin's Handbook*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.