

General Preparation**1. Review Your Syllabus**

Your professor creates assignments to help you achieve the course objectives. Consider what the objectives are for this course. What might you be tested on during this assignment? How can you best demonstrate mastery of any required skills or concepts?

2. Review Your Essay Assignment, if possible

Not every instructor will give you a prompt beforehand, but if they do, read it! If you cannot see the assignment prompt ahead of time, ask if you can see sample assignments from previous semesters.

3. Do a Test Run

Reduce your sense of panic on the day of. Practice, either with a real prompt or a fake assignment that you make up. Get used to writing under time pressure.

Strategy: Ask a WRLC tutor to give you a writing prompt. Go into the quiet study room to write your essay. Sign back up for a tutoring session to get feedback (it doesn't even have to be the same tutor)!

Before You Write**1. Commit to a Topic**

A common mistake is to spend too much time trying to decide what to write about. The first step, after reading the prompt, is to pick a topic and stick with it. Commit to a topic and focus on making the most of the time to write a strong, well-developed essay.

2. Make an Outline

Even with the time constraint, you should take the time to brainstorm and sketch an outline, however brief, to organize the main idea and overall structure of your essay. This will save you time in the long run because you will have a map to follow as you write.

Strategy: If you are writing on the computer, use this phrasal outline as your first draft. Replace those phrases with proper topic sentences, then write supporting details underneath. Simply take out the bullet points when you're done!

*Strategy: If you are writing on paper, bring as many pieces of paper as you plan on writing paragraphs (ex. 5 paragraphs = 5 pieces of paper). Write the main idea of each paragraph at the top of the page, then write the corresponding paragraph on each page. Simply staple the pages together in the correct order when you are done. **!CHECK WITH YOUR PROFESSOR BEFOREHAND ABOUT THIS!***

3. Set Your Time Limits

Before you start writing, decide how long you plan to spend prewriting, writing, and revising/proofreading. Then, stick to that plan.

Strategy: Try 25% prewriting, 50% writing, and 25% revising/proofreading

As You Write

1. Write the Body Paragraphs

Start with the body paragraphs, if you can. Your thesis may not be fully clear to you until you've written the main part of the essay. Focus on developing strong body paragraphs.

Strategy: Keep an "idea sheet" off to the side. If you have an idea that you like, but it's not related to the specific paragraph you're writing now, write down a phrase or two to remember it for later.

2. Write the Introduction

Once you have strong body paragraphs, take time to write a strong hook or attention grabbing first sentence as well as a clear, focused thesis.

Strategy: Don't get too fancy with your thesis. State your claim, then list the three controlling ideas. It's not glamorous, but it almost always works.

3. Write the Conclusion

Don't forget to save time to write the conclusion. Now that you've written the thesis and body paragraphs, end with a strong sense of purpose. The reader should know "So What?" when they finish your essay.

Strategy: A good way to start that last sentence is "This is significant because ..."

After You Write

1. Revise

Focus first on big-picture concerns like organization, topic sentences, and transition words. If you need to, rewrite sentences that are unclear or add in new examples to support your point.

Strategy: If you are writing on the computer, make good use of the cut/paste tool.

Strategy: If you are writing by hand, use the space between lines to rewrite if you need. Don't be afraid to cross things out.

2. Proofread

Take a moment to look over your grammar and punctuation. Don't worry about catching every single mistake. Instead, look for the kinds of errors you typically make.

Strategy: If you are writing on the computer and know of common problem words or errors you make, use the Ctrl+F feature to find them.

Strategy: If you are writing by hand, use a pencil!

GOOD LUCK!