

Emily's Top 10 Tips for Writing Papers

Read these writing tips to take some of the stress out of writing. They worked for me!

1. Warm up, loosen up, start early. Read the assignment carefully. Reread it. If you'll need outside information, head off to the library and visit your friendly librarian. Factor in time for waiting your turn in crowded computer labs.
2. Jumpstart your brain with some of these brainstorming techniques from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/brainstorming.html>
3. Write a quick—and ugly—first draft. Perfection will come with revision.
4. “Save early, save often.” Save your work on the computer to a jump drive, CD or disk. Avoid the heartbreak of losing all your work when your computer crashes.
5. Quality vs. quantity. Make a quick pass through each of your drafts to cut out clutter. Eliminating clutter leaves room for the important stuff—clear thinking and clear writing. Try Richard Lanham's easy “Paramedic Method”
<http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/concise.html>
6. Things look different in the morning. Allow yourself time to put your paper down overnight or, better yet, for a few days. You'll read it with fresh eyes and be better able to spot gaps in logic and support.
7. Think you're finished? Read your final draft aloud to a friend or into a tape recorder. What sounds weird? Reread the assignment. Have you fulfilled it?
8. Don't rely too much on your word processing program's grammar- or spell-checking features. They won't catch misuse of sound-alike words such as “there” and “their,” or the adverb “visually” mistakenly used as the adjective “visual.”
9. Most schools have writing centers where you can go for help with your writing. Don't be embarrassed to take advantage of these services, which are often offered by experienced students. If you're not sure if your school has a writing center, check with your English Department.
10. Save all your drafts. They can serve as evidence in your favor should you be accused of plagiarism. Not sure what plagiarism is or how to avoid it? See this handout from Purdue University:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01>