

Writing Specialist's Top Writing Tips

1. Understand Your Assignment

Go over your assignment instructions and rubric. It's important you understand what the assignment is asking you to do and how. This information helps you focus and develop your argument. The rubric also tells you which parts of the assignment are worth the most and may require more attention.

2. Know Your Course Material

Assignments ask that students apply course methods, concepts, and/or theories in their assignments. Make sure you have a strong, grounded knowledge of your course material before you start writing or else you will sacrifice the quality of your paper.

3. Organize Your Ideas and Make an Argument

Most assignments ask you to discuss a topic. This is called making an argument, and this is your thesis statement. You need to analyze your thesis and convince your reader it's important. Brainstorm about your thesis and organize your support using graphic essay organizers, mind maps, charts, or outlines. The more you plan beforehand, the better and easier writing it will be.

4. Manage Your Assignment Time!

Do not leave your assignment until the night before it's due! Give yourself plenty of time to plan, research, draft, edit, and submit your assignment. This will help you manage the assignment workload and your stress so that the paper you hand in is clear, concise, and polished.

5. Gather Class and Scholarly Information

While including course content is important, you need research/evidence to back up each of the points you are making. Make use of books, academic journals, or reputable websites for evidence.

6. Follow an Academic Essay Structure

All essays have an introduction, main body, and conclusion. Make sure your main body paragraphs are structured: as a general rule remember one point = one paragraph. An academic paragraph should follow the University of Hull's PEEL structure: Point (assert something), Evidence (back up your point with references or experience), Explanation (how this helps answer the question), Link (to the next paragraph if necessary).

7. Have a Critical Analysis That Flows!

The analysis is the part of your paragraphs that carry the most value marks wise. You need to show you can discuss and analyze facts and link them to the argument you have presented. Make sure every paragraph explains why it is relevant to answering the essay question or reaching your conclusion, and that your points are presented in a logical order.

8. Oblige the Academic Writing Conventions!

As a student at MHC, you are expected to understand and practice Academic Integrity in your writing. This means properly citing and referencing research and words that are not your own, using reputable resources, avoiding using informal language in assignments (e.g. contractions, slang, clichés, conversational tone, inappropriate acronyms, etc.), and following proper essay and paragraph structure.

9. Revise and Edit Before Submission

The first draft of your essay will not be perfect. Carefully read over and edit your work. Look at your grammar, punctuation, tone, spelling, and referencing to make corrections. Also, take a last look at your assignment outline to make sure your essay meets the instructor's guidelines (i.e. Times New Roman size 12 font, margins, double-spacing, etc.).

10. Read Your Instructor's Feedback!

The best way to learn from your mistakes is looking at the feedback your instructor gives. Don't overlook it!

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Drop-in Service: Mon-Fri. 11am-1pm in the Vera Bracken Library