Essay Writing Checklist

# Understand the assignment and read about the topic

* Get copies of the requirements of the assignment and the rubric, if provided.
* Gather credible research (articles, graphics, documents) appropriate for your paper, including source information.
* Create notes, marked up texts, highlighted information, own ideas in response to readings.
* Find quotations from research (highlighted or listed) that are interesting and provocative. Paraphrase several in your own words.

# Draft a thesis and working outline

* Formulate a question that your essay will respond to.
* Convert the question into a working thesis that communicates the claim you want to make or prove.
* Decide on which materials/resources are most helpful for your paper.
* Find main ideas in your resources that could be developed into sections of your paper.
* Locate specific information/quotes that could help support your main ideas.
* Consider the types of readers who might be most interested in what you have to say.
* Gather more material that supports your focus.
* Create a brief outline that displays all main ideas, evidence and supporting details for your claim.

# Write a first draft and organize

* Use your outline as a roadmap to construct an organized essay.
* Write an introduction that interests the reader, provides context for the issue, has a strong thesis, and forecasts your main points.
* Write body paragraphs with clear topic sentences that relate back to your thesis and control the content.
* Use quotes/paraphrasing as EVIDENCE to support your own thinking, not as a tool to repeat what you have already said.
* Include opposing points of view, if required, and address them fairly.
* Use “signposts” along the way‐‐phrases and transitional expressions that help a reader understand your purpose. (i.e. “First,” “For example,” ”To further demonstrate this,” “As a result,” “As mentioned earlier”)
* Write a conclusion that includes a summary of the strongest main point(s), a restatement of the thesis, and a thoughtful final statement.
* Ensure that every paragraph contributes clearly to your thesis or main idea.

# Write a second draft and edit, format, and proofread

* Double-check that each paragraph has a topic sentence.
* Address any unclear or confusing passages that your peers or a tutor have pointed out.
* Make sure that every sentence in each paragraph relates to the main point of the paragraph.
* Provide smooth transitions from one paragraph to another.
* Make sure each sentence expresses a complete thought. (If you’re not sure, try reading the paper backwards.)
* Vary sentence structure.
* Correctly cite other authors’ words and ideas in the text of your essay and built a correctly-written Works Cited (MLA) or References (APA) page.
* Check for correct grammar usage.
* Format the paper according to the assignment specifications
* Proofread

# Additional helpful hints for a successful essay

* All writers can benefit from having others read their works-in-progress. Share your paper and get critical feedback from friends, family, classmates, and writing tutors!
* Go to the Writing Center and have some consultations about the essay. You can go in right from the beginning and brainstorm ideas! Then come back all along the way!
* Don’t worry about formatting or writing the perfect sentence the first time. Get your ideas down on the page and do your editing and formatting later.