

9 Writing Strategies for Any Academic Paper

1. Write about something that interests you—this is most important

Choose topics that will inspire you to delve deeper into research, explore others' perspectives, synthesize new ideas, and spend time writing, revising, and editing. If you have trouble thinking of a topic, review your syllabus and course readings: What stands out to you? Review your class notes or journal: What ideas have you already come up with that might be appropriate and applicable for the assignment? Find a way to connect.

2. Read

Reading helps you generate ideas, particularly if you're feeling confused about what is expected of you. Reread the assignment with a classmate. Get together with other students and read each other's papers. Or, ask the professor to suggest some journal articles for you to look at for inspiration. Search your course notes and textbook for small facts or moments that draw your attention. Begin to wonder, to ask why: Why does this draw my attention? Why is this mentioned? Or even why is something missing that you expected? Try to find out.

3. Talk

This strategy could include visiting the [Richard Wright Center](#). Talk about your paper, your ideas, and your problems with the assignment. Talking with your professors, your classmates, and your friends (or RWC tutor) will allow you to test out new ideas, find a topic you care about, talk through problems, and see where other people stand on your issue.

4. Write a really bad paper

It will give you a foundation on which to build a really great paper. Just be daring and try out radical ideas.

5. Have ideas

Make sure that each paper has an argument or an idea that you create—share what you think. Identify what evidence should be used to support the ideas you develop.

6. Take risks in ideas and in structure

If your idea doesn't work out, try something else. Use complex and diverse sentences. Have fun while you're writing!

7. Ground ideas in evidence

Each idea in a paper should be firmly based in analysis of course readings, outside scholarly literature, field-notes, research, or whatever evidence you are expected to consider. Every idea, even from an expert, should have some fact, research, or personal observation that supports it.

8. Expect to revise

No successful writer skips this step and #9. Revise once, twice, as many times as needed. Be prepared to reorganize your thesis statement or change your argument if necessary. Your data will back you up. Make sure that your thesis statement is clear, that it is in your introduction, that you have transitions marking each main point (e.g., First, Second,), that you signal each piece of evidence (e.g., According to) AND explain why you think it is important to your argument.

9. Allow time to edit

Attending to grammar, content, and organization is key to an excellent paper. Good writing doesn't happen by magic.