Writing Papers
Do’s and Don’ts for Completing Your Written Assignments

Selecting a Topic
- Consider the requirements (length, research/argument/technical report, sources, etc.).
- Be careful to narrow the topic: specific enough that you can tackle it, but broad enough to stay interesting.
- If you have questions, you can always meet with a professor or TA to discuss your topic!

Research
- Review pertinent notes from class lectures and discussions.
- Utilize the resources online and in the library. Librarians are here to help!
- Always keep track of the helpful sources, you’ll need to cite them later!
- Remember: research takes unexpected turns; don’t let that discourage you.

Outlining
- Organize your ideas!
- Outlines help you develop your argument and purpose, along with organizing supporting evidence.
- Your paper should follow a logical pattern. Don’t confuse your reader!
- When you write an outline, follow it, but don’t be afraid to let your argument develop as you go.

First Drafts
- Use your outline!
- Document your citation as you go. You don’t want to forget a source later.
- Keep the audience in mind. Tip: don’t assume your reader is an expert; introduce the topic to them!
- Remember: the earlier you start writing these drafts, the more time you have to perfect them later.

Revising
- Proofreading is more than grammar! Do the ideas flow logically? Does your argument make sense?
- Try reading the paper aloud.
- Consider letting a friend, classmate, TA, or professor read over a draft and provide their insight.
- The Johns Hopkins Writing Center is a valuable resource!

Final Draft
- Reread the assignment guidelines. You don’t want to lose any points for style!
- Make sure to include a title and all works cited in the correct format.
- Your final paper is the product of a writing process and should reflect the time and effort you put into it. Be proud of it!

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