

Guide to Academic Writing

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Abstract

The topic of academic writing is a complex one. There are many different aspects that go into it, and many different formats and criteria that are desired by different disciplines. All of the different parts of successful academic writing can make it seem like a daunting experience. However, there are certain things that stay the same across all types of academic writing. This includes the initial preparation of organizing thought and ideas into an outline for the paper, doing research and finding sources that are credible and support the paper, and ensuring that you check your work to make sure it is the best it can be and make alterations when necessary. With these things, writing academic papers will become more of a comfortable experience, and it will eliminate the stress of planning, not being able to write a sufficient amount of information, and decrease the number of mistakes that are made in the paper in any aspect of the writing, thus making college students successful across all subjects.

When transitioning from high school to college, a common concern for students may be about college level writing, or academic writing. It seems intimidating at the start, since all the aspects that go into writing a good academic paper seem entirely too complicated compared to the papers that students write in high school, what with the extensive research and strict formatting. However, it is important to remember that with a little help and preparation, it isn't very difficult to achieve. Taking into consideration what students learn about writing in high school, and then just building on that is essentially what it takes to be a strong writer on a college level. With that being said, the most important pieces of advice on writing academic papers well are to organize your ideas, research sources thoroughly and make sure they are credible, and to take your time to look over the work and do what you can to ensure you are writing at your full potential.

One of the very first, and most important, steps a student should take when writing an academic paper is to organize their thoughts. This comes with reading the prompt or topic, making sure you understand what is being asked, and figure out which format is required for the specific papers, whether it be APA, MLA, or Chicago. Ensuring that you fully understand what you must do and how to achieve a good mark on your paper is key. Once that is established, students should begin to brainstorm ideas, and write down thoughts, ideas, or points that tie into the paper. Organize the ideas, eliminate what isn't needed, focus in on figuring out what you want to say about the topics you are writing about, and try to come up with a sufficient amount of information. Doing this, essentially creating an outline for the paper, will help students not get stuck when writing because they can't figure out what to say next, will create a plan that students can stick to and perfect rather than coming up with ideas along the way and not having a clear

focus of what they are doing, and will ensure that students are able to figure out the best way to put their ideas together in a way that flows effortlessly, makes sense, and gets their point across how they envisioned.

While organizing thoughts and ideas is an immensely crucial first step, it is necessary to have good research and sources to back up the information being written in the paper. Whether it be two or ten sources, finding ones that are credible and work with the topic at hand can be nerve wrecking and challenging, but if you know what to look for, it will be a breeze. When searching for useful material from trustworthy and acknowledged researchers, the students need to separate “academic texts” from other, “non-academic texts”, so that they can find reliable earlier research. To be able to judge the value of any text, it is necessary to first make a classification based on its properties, for instance related to the style, structure, contents, and/or length, or to the context in which it occurs (Mattus, 2007). A good rule of thumb when looking for credible sources is to avoid anything that ends in “.com”. Websites such as Google Scholar, the UNT Dallas Library database, or any library for that matter, would be a great place to start. Research from universities or academic journals are good credible sources, as well as documents that have been peer reviewed or cited by other researchers. Once the research has been done a few times, it becomes a lot easier to separate what is good research and what isn’t simply by taking a quick look at the content.

When all the research is cited, the format is correct, and the paper looks done, it might be tempting to just submit it and be through with it, however it is extremely important to go over the work a few times and take your time making it the best it can be. Don’t procrastinate, but always take your time. Look over your work and see if there is any spelling or grammar mistakes,

change the wording when needed in order to make the paper sound better, and look over the sources that were cited and make sure they were done so properly to avoid any plagiarism (Bytyqi, 2021). There are plenty of resources available online and through schools, such as the UNT Dallas Writing Center, that will assist students and provide feedback to make sure that their academic paper is the best that it can be, so don't be afraid to use them. The process of writing a good academic paper is lengthy and at times difficult, but the hard part is done now. So, never submit a first draft, and always make sure to check your work to ensure all the criteria is met, and you wrote the paper you wanted to write the best you could.

In brief, writing academic papers can be intimidating, and may seem entirely too complicated to students starting college, but it doesn't have to be. Many resources are available to help answer any questions, from the internet, to professors, to writing centers. With a little preparation and work, writing academic papers will become a breeze. Making sure that the topic is understood fully and creating an outline to organize thoughts, doing research and finding credible sources that help reinforce the topic, and double-checking your work to make sure it is acceptable will help make sure that students' academic papers are correct and well-written. While you won't become expert academic writers overnight, taking this advice, along with other tips from professors, students, or professionals, will get you pretty close to where you need to be.