



## Student Resources: Tips for Writing an Essay

Ready to start your essay? The list below can help you plan! You might consider setting a due date for each step to help manage your time. Talk to a teacher or other mentor if you need help figuring out how much time to plan for each item.

### STEP 1: BRAINSTORM!

- Write down your essay ideas. It's OK if they are messy. That's brainstorming!
- Sometimes it can be helpful to brainstorm during a couple of different sessions with breaks in between.



### STEP 2: PICK YOUR TOPIC

- Look at the ideas you came up with and select the one that fits the prompt well and interests you the most.
- Sometimes other ideas from brainstorming are related and can be included in the idea you choose or the topics you cover within the essay.
- It's important to share your own point of view. What would YOU like to say and why? What are YOUR thoughts and feelings on the topic?
- Think about ways to communicate the topic to the reader. Is there a story from history or from your life that can help explain it? Is there an argument you can make using research and evidence?

### STEP 3: RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC

- Read about your topic to learn more about it. What is known? What remains to be discovered or understood?
- How does what you learn fit in with your understanding when you started and how does it fit with the essay prompt?
- Remember to write down the places you find information, so that you have your resources to go back to during writing and to list on the essay application.

### TROUBLESHOOTING

Feeling stuck? Try these tips:

#### Take a break!

Walk around, read a book, or play a game, then get back into your essay once you're feeling refreshed.

#### Try a different angle.

Adjust your approach by looking for different examples or information to spark new thoughts.

#### Ask for help!

Discuss where you are having trouble with a teacher, family member, or friend. Sometimes just talking about the problem can help generate ideas for solving it.



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### STEP 4: ORGANIZE AN OUTLINE

- Now that you know more about the topic, organize your thoughts about what you want to say.
- What will be your **objective** or main point?
- Once you have identified your focus, develop an introduction, body and conclusion. You can think of this as telling a story with a beginning, a middle and an end.
  - The **introduction or beginning** should be engaging. How can you make a reader interested in what you are discussing? By the end of the introduction, your reader should know your objective, meaning what you plan to prove or argue in favor of throughout the rest of your essay.
  - The **body or middle** is the part where you develop your ideas to support the objective. This part typically includes a few paragraphs, depending on the length of the piece you are writing.
  - The **conclusion or end** of your essay is where you wrap up and leave readers with the most important message, takeaway point or idea to ponder.



### STEP 5: DRAFT AND EDIT

- After you get a first draft on paper, check where you are on length and then determine whether you need to add or delete information. Look for points that are not well-developed or points that can be removed because they are not important to the main idea.
- You may want to read your essay out loud so you can hear how it flows and what sections might need more work.
- Ask for feedback from friends, family and teachers.
- Remember that professional writers usually create several drafts before they get a piece finalized.

### STEP 6: REFINE YOUR ESSAY

- Double-check things like word count, spelling and grammar.
- Craft a title that fits your essay. Think about a title that accurately reflects what the essay is about while also considering how to capture a reader's attention.



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ESSAY RESOURCES  
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