The Writing Process

1. Select a topic to research.
2. Brainstorm or “explore.”
   • Ask questions about your topic such as Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
   • Search the library or internet for ideas.
   • Discuss your topic with other students or friends.
   • Journal or free write about your topic—write anything that comes to mind.
3. Research your topic some more: journals, internet articles, books, etc.
   • What are scholars, academics, and experts discussing?
   • Are there any current arguments or debates?
   • What published ideas contribute to your insight?
4. Narrow your ideas and develop an outline.
   • Develop a specific or narrow thesis statement that pinpoints what your essay will discuss. Keep in mind the purpose of your essay—is it to entertain, inform, or persuade your audience?

   EXAMPLE THESIS: The Industrial Revolution significantly changed American women’s familial role.
   (This thesis promises to objectively inform the reader.)

   EXAMPLE THESIS: While the Industrial Revolution organized America’s economy, it actually hindered women by defining clear gender roles.
   (This thesis proposes an argument.)

   • Develop at least three main points to support your thesis.
5. Begin drafting by carefully following your outline.
6. Revise.
   • In this stage, be flexible or open to change.
   • Fill in gaps with more research.
   • Fully develop all relevant ideas.
   • Remove any irrelevant ideas.
7. Edit.
   • Use a writing handbook to check MLA format, grammar, and usage.
8. Proofread.
   • Read your essay aloud.
   • Finalize all revisions.
Writing Checklist

Style, Tone, and Grammar

___ Have I edited for unclear pronoun reference?
___ Have I avoided using contractions like can’t? (Spell words out: cannot)
___ Have I avoided clichés and vague words or phrases?
___ Do my sentences flow from one to another?
___ Have I edited for wordiness and unnecessary repetition? Can I express my ideas more concisely?
___ Did I edit for fragments and run-ons? (Do my sentences make a complete thought?)
___ Do I have too many sentences joined together?)
___ Did I edit for punctuation and capitalization errors?
___ Do I use third person pronouns throughout my essay and avoid second and first person pronouns like “you,” “yours,” “I,” and “we”?
___ Have I left my essay alone for a day or at least an hour before the final edit?
___ Have I read my paper aloud?

Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Documenting

___ Have I checked to see if all of my quotation punctuation is accurate?
___ Have I double-checked my sources to make sure I accurately quote them word for word?
___ Do all of my parenthetical documentations appear after a paraphrase or quote and not in the middle of a sentence?
___ Did I consult my handbook for any difficult or unusual documentations?
___ If I am quoting and purposely leave out some information, do I use an ellipses (. . .)?
___ When I paraphrase, do I use my own words and sentence structure to express someone else’s ideas?

Works Cited Page

___ Are all of my sources listed in alphabetical order?
___ Is my works cited page numbered in with the rest of my paper?
___ Did I use a hanging indent?
___ Is the entire page double-spaced?
___ Does the heading Works Cited appear as the centered title of the page?
___ Did I edit for punctuation, such as misplaced periods or colons?