



## Graduate Online Writing Studio

### Time Management for Writing Assignments

College writing assignments can cause stress, and students often find themselves putting their writing assignments off until the last minute, leading them to rush through their work, leaving insufficient time for revision. By planning ahead and using the following time-management tips, you can complete your assignments early, leaving time for meaningful and substantive revision.

#### **Develop a plan of attack for your assignments.**

The writing process takes time and involves several steps. The first step in the process is planning, and it should start as soon as you receive the assignment. Read through the assignment carefully and highlight or make note of all requirements (e.g., due date, topic, length, sections required, number and type of sources required, etc.). You can also write down any questions you have for your instructor at this time if you need clarification on any part of the assignment. Once you have a strong grasp of the requirements of the assignment, write out a plan or schedule to give yourself deadlines for each part of the writing process (i.e., research, outlining, drafting, revision\*). Make sure to give yourself enough time in this schedule to complete each part of the assignment fully with breaks in between to fully absorb and process the information for the assignment. Setting up this type of schedule and spacing out the time between completing each portion of the assignment can help reduce the stress of the process.

#### **Breaking up longer assignments can make them more manageable.**

Lengthy assignments can sometimes feel overwhelming. If you find yourself daunted by a longer assignment, consider breaking it up into smaller portions to make it feel more manageable. For instance, if you have a 10-page paper due, set up a skeleton outline listing out the various paragraphs and topics to be covered in the paper. You should end up with 15 to 20 items in your outline to meet the page length for the paper, but writing 15 to 20 paragraphs only a few hundred words in length each can feel like a much more attainable goal than writing a 10-page paper in one sitting.

#### **Dedicate distraction-free time to your writing.**

This tip may seem like a no-brainer, but writing while distracted takes a lot longer than writing without distractions. When you sit down to write, remove any distractions like phones, televisions, social media, etc., allowing you to focus on the task at hand. Eliminating these distractions will help you to fully engage in the writing process and be more productive as you work on your assignment.

### **Create your reference page as you complete your research.**

Researching your topic is one of the most important early stages of the writing process. As you research, create a reference for each source you look at or think will be relevant to your final project. Building this reference page early in the writing process will help you to catalog your research so that you remember what you have read, and you can even write notes or annotations in your reference page for future use. If you build the reference page before you write your paper, you can also use it to create your in-text citations as you write rather than waiting to add them later, saving you time overall. The reference page can also be used as a tool to find sources again if you lose them while writing the paper.

### **Work when you are the most productive.**

Everyone works differently. Some people feel more productive when they first wake up in the morning while others experience more productivity at night. Schedule your writing time when it works best for you and when you know that you will be feeling the most productive. Doing so will help you to get the most out of your scheduled writing time and progress further in the writing process than working during off hours.

### **Create a checklist.**

Many derive satisfaction or gain a sense of accomplishment from checking off a to-do list. You can use this trait to your advantage as you work on your assignments. Write down a checklist of all the things you need to do in order, and as you complete them, check them off. The more you check off, the better you will feel about your assignment, and the progress on the list will serve as a reference to give you an idea of where you are in the process of completing the assignment.

### **Be flexible with yourself.**

Writers commonly feel stuck or unmotivated. If you feel bogged down by research or just cannot seem to get that introduction down, switch gears and work on something else or give yourself an hour or so to refresh. Even though you want to stick to your schedule, giving yourself the flexibility to adjust that schedule can help that schedule to meet your needs. If you skip over something like writing your introduction or finding your last few sources on one of your topics, make a note of it in your schedule or checklist and come back to it so that you can complete it later. Be careful not to be too flexible and end up procrastinating.

### **Work with a buddy.**

You may have heard people discussing working out with a friend to keep themselves accountable to their exercise routine. The same thing works for the writing process! Find a classmate and plan your schedules together so that you can both work at the same pace and keep each other accountable throughout the process. This step can help keep you on task and motivated because you know someone else is counting on you to keep up with the process.