

# Writing Awesome Essays

1. **Get the assignment right!** For example, what kind of essay am I writing? Can I use “I” or “you”? Should I do any research? How long should the essay be? Can I pick my own topic?

**Bottom Line: Ask questions if you do not understand the assignment.**

2. **Gather several ideas for your essay.** Use brainstorming, make lists or an outline, do research, etc. It’s better to have too much information for your essay than not enough.

**Bottom Line: Before writing, gather ideas and begin some sort of rough organization.**

3. **Get to work on the writing!** This is the rough draft stage, when you begin to put ideas into essay format. Do NOT get hung up on perfection at this stage—do not let things like the introduction, conclusion, or grammar problems stop you in your tracks. Your thesis statement may need to be changed as you compose.

**Bottom Line: Attempt a first draft of your essay (especially the body paragraphs), understanding that no one can write a perfect draft the first time.**

4. **Allow time to revise.** This step involves the big questions of essay writing: Is my essay long enough? Do I consider my audience? Do I stay on topic? Do I make it easy for my readers to follow me from point to point? Is my tone appropriate? Have I included enough specific details to be interesting and convincing?

**Bottom Line: Revision is the most important part of improving your essay. It takes time, and you may want to get some input from your instructor or a tutor in the Drop-in Writing Lab.**

5. **Grammar comes last.** This is when you proofread your paper. Reading your paper out loud is a good way to catch errors. What you don't want to do is turn in a paper full of mistakes that you obviously overlooked. As a college student, there are some errors that you should not make (see "Final Words of Caution" below).

**Bottom Line: Correcting spelling, punctuation, etc. is how you polish your essay.**

### **Final Words of Caution:**

Your instructor will know if you write a hasty draft and submit it as is. Don't do it! If plagiarism is a concern, consult your instructor, a writing tutor, or visit the website *turnitin.com*.

Grammar may seem like a picky, unimportant detail in writing, but grammatical and careless errors create rhetorical block, which stop the reader from enjoying your writing. Learn which errors you are prone to make, and learn how to correct them. Examples of actual student sentences with grammatical mistakes:

1. Yolanda's car will be toad if she doesn't hurry.
2. The dog, which was a pure bread, won a trophy.
3. The winters in Arkansas get cold, but nothing like winter in Arkansas.

Writing well takes hard work and an investment of time. If there is a "magic ingredient" in awesome essays, it is specific detail. Don't just give the bare minimum of three blah sentences to make up a paragraph; make the extra effort.

Do you know a good storyteller? What makes that person's stories memorable? A good storyteller usually makes the audience feel as if they were there (sensory details and strong verbs), good writers use humor when appropriate, and a good pace (unity and transitional phrases), and tells all the story (thoroughness). Imitate good readers and writers, and ask for help!