

## HUNG UP WRITING PAPERS? FREE YOURSELF!

*Plan.* Set a target date. When is your paper due?

*Organize.* Break your effort into steps (outlined below).  
Look at your calendar and divide up the remaining days. Set target days now complete each step.

*Start working.*

Writing a paper requires CREATIVE and CRITICAL energy.

### 1. CREATIVELY **choose** a topic.

Target date \_\_\_\_\_

If you may choose your own topic, choose one that interests you. Choose something you know about, either your own experience or something you can learn about quickly with the available resources. To find ideas, check the index of your textbook. Ponder possibilities as you read or think. Jot down ideas as they occur to you and keep them in one place. If your instructor assigns the topic, be sure you understand it. If you're not completely sure, get clarification from your instructor, a T.A., or another student in the class. If you are not interested in the topic, develop an interest by finding a good (that is, personal) reason for doing the assignment.

### 2. CRITICALLY **narrow** your topic.

Target date \_\_\_\_\_

Choose a topic limited enough in scope that you can go into sufficient detail within the space available. (This may take time and occur as you read or write.) For example, narrow your topic from "history of art" to "history of art from 1865 to 1900" to "history of French art from 1895 to 1900" to "comparison of Impressionism and Symbolism in French art from 1895 to 1900."

### 3. CREATIVELY **collect** your ideas.

Target date \_\_\_\_\_

To collect ideas from reading, ask a librarian for help locating the materials. Use 3X5 cards to keep notes about separate ideas from your reading. Include author, title, and page number on each card. Make a separate bibliography card for each source. To generate more ideas, recall your own experiences. Daydream about them; follow your thoughts. Brainstorm—write down as quickly as you can any ideas that might be connected to your topic. Don't worry about order, wording, or even whether you'll finally include these ideas in your paper. You can sort these out later. Talk to other people for more ideas.

### 4. CRITICALLY **organize** your ideas.

Target date \_\_\_\_\_

Make an outline. This is essential. Browse through your collected notes until you detect a pattern in them. Put similar ideas together. Shuffle your note cards (or cut pages into pieces and shuffle them): How many ways can you see to relate to these ideas? Arrange these groups of notes to reflect how they are related. If no suitable pattern occurs, go away for a while, then try again. Or, ignore the data; make up an outline about how you want things to be. See if you can fit your data into it. Make a thesis statement. Write a paragraph or two (or talk to someone for a few minutes) summarize what you want to say. Be sure that each paragraph you write is directed toward developing a thesis.

**5. CREATIVELY write your first draft.**

Target date \_\_\_\_\_

Gather all the materials you need (notes, paper, pencils, typewriter, etc), allow yourself sometime, and start writing. Allow yourself no excuses and try hard. Work quickly. Don't worry about exact word choice or refinements of grammar; you can edit and revise later, if you have something to work with. Get order you've already determined in your outline. Remember, you already formulated. If you freeze, "talk your ideas to someone real or imagined or to a tape recorder. Explain as simply and as clearly as you can what you want to say. Then transcribe onto paper what you've said. Or very quickly, write out your ideas and then scrap them. Do this several times until you feel easier about putting words on paper. If you are fearful that your paper won't be long enough, repeat some of the suggestions under number 1 above. Or ask yourself what can you do to guarantee that your ideas have been accurately and thoroughly explained. Could you explain more carefully, give an example, etc.? **Then, give you draft a rest.** Set it aside for a while or get some feedback from someone who can point out major problems or inconsistencies.

**6. CRITICALLY revise your rough draft.**

Target date \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Complete your rough draft revision several days or at least 24 hours before due date!

Check organization: Does one paragraph follow another logically? Provide transitions. Cut paragraphs out and rearrange them with glue or tape like pieces of a puzzle.

Check unity: Do all the paragraphs develop your thesis? Is your thesis clearly stated somewhere, usually at the beginning or end of the paper? Is each paragraph unified around a stated or clearly implied topic sentence?

Check sentence structure: Are sentences grammatically correct? Are your sentences varied in length and structure, designed to emphasize key ideas? Do they indicate relationship clearly, express ideas economically? Are they punctuated correctly? Enlarge the type so mistakes are more apparent

Check word choice: Are your words concrete? Appropriate? Use a thesaurus for new ideas, but be sure you use them accurately.

Read the paper aloud or tape it. Does it sound awkward? Have a friend read the paper to see if she or he can follow your thought. Make necessary changes.

**7. Type a final draft and turn it in!**

Target date \_\_\_\_\_