

The Stages of Academic Writing

Researching

- ☑ Know what the assignment is and what your professor expects.
- ☑ Select a topic and do some preliminary research to develop a basic understanding.
- ☑ Develop a well-formulated research question:
 - “Where do the majority of consumers’ loyalties lie in the *Dunkin’ Donuts* (DD) coffee versus *Starbucks* coffee debate?”
- ☑ Develop a tentative hypothesis that begins to answer your research question and begins to narrow your focus by answering the questions “To whom does this apply?” “Why?” “Based on what standards?”
 - “The majority of coffee consumers prefer the *Starbucks* brand because of the company’s reputation, availability, and specialty flavors.”
- ☑ Access peer-reviewed sources through database articles, encyclopedias, books, and reliable web sources.
- ☑ Spend quality time reading and annotating your sources.
- ☑ When researching, ask yourself...
 - What reasons support my overall claim in response to my research question?
 - What evidence supports those reasons?
 - How do I respond to objections and alternative views?
 - What principle makes these reasons relevant to my claim? (Turabian 51).
- ☑ Find reasons and evidence within sources that help determine whether your working hypothesis accurately answers the research question or needs modifying.
 - If the research indicates that *DD* is cheaper, has higher quality beans, and consumers think it tastes better, then you need to modify your original claim to reflect this despite your original opinion.
- ☑ Evaluate your research question to determine whether it needs refining for specificity.
 - Unscholarly sources
 - Out-of-date sources
 - One-sided evidence
 - Contradictions (Turabian 55).

Forming a Thesis Statement

- ☑ The thesis is a single sentence that answers your refined research question. It combines the main claim you are making in the paper and the reasons that support that claim.
 - An examination of **pricing** (reason 1), **taste** (reason 2), and **bean quality** (reason 3) reveals that the majority of consumers prefer *Dunkin’ Donuts* coffee to *Starbucks* coffee (claim).
 - *Note:* the evidence supporting your reasons make up the body paragraphs of the paper.
- ☑ How do I know I have a strong thesis statement?
 - Does it stray from my refined research question?
 - Can you identify key terms that unite the entire paper as well as terms that distinguish one section from another?
 - Are there logical, chronological, or cause/effect reasons connected through these key terms that will uphold your case?

Outlining

- ☑ Make sure each section of your outline addresses your research question and does not drift from the main topic.
- ☑ Use your thesis as the organizing principle by ordering your reasons with corresponding evidence in your body paragraphs based on the succession you presented them in your thesis.
- ☑ Start the outline with your claim and “add complete sentences under it” stating “a **reason** supporting your claim” (Turabian 64). Summarize your evidence and list them underneath each sectioned reason (Turabian 64).
 - I. Consumers prefer *DD* coffee compared to *Starbucks* coffee (claim).
 - a. *DD* coffee is priced cheaper than *Starbucks* (**reason**).
 - i. Menu prices show that *DD* prices are much lower than *Starbucks*’ prices.
 1. Articles listing *DD* prices (Johnson 62; Smith 35; Walton 43)
 2. Articles listing *Starbucks* prices (Canton 35; Jones 112)

Drafting

- ☑ If you spent an adequate amount of time researching and outlining, the writing process should be the simplest step.
- ☑ Refer to the research question as well as your outline throughout the writing process to prevent any rabbit trails. Draft your paper by answering the research question authoritatively using research and analysis before setting it aside.

Revising & Proofreading

- ☑ After some time, approach the paper with refreshed eyes and read sections aloud, listening for any areas that need revision.
- ☑ Evaluate Macro Writing Skills:
 - Does my paper fulfill the requirements of the assignment prompt?
 - Does my thesis adequately answer my research question?
 - Does the organization of my paper make finding the answer to my research question easier or more difficult?
 - Did I use relevant, scholarly sources?
 - Did I cite my sources according to the style manual and correctly paraphrase?
 - Do my topic and transition sentences clearly relate to the research relating to the research question?
- ☑ Evaluate Micro Writing Skills:
 - Active Voice
 - (See the *Active vs Passive Voice* handout)
 - Grammar & Punctuation
 - (See the *Punctuation Chart* and *Sentence Variety Chart*)
 - Clarity—do my sentences have clear characters as subjects and actions as verbs?
 - Style & Formatting
 - (Review the appropriate style manual and WC style handouts.)