

Writing research essays

One of the most common types of writing you'll do is essay writing. Essays are standard across all college majors. Use essays to illustrate your understanding of complex topics and your ability to conduct scholarly research.

Types of research essays

Informative

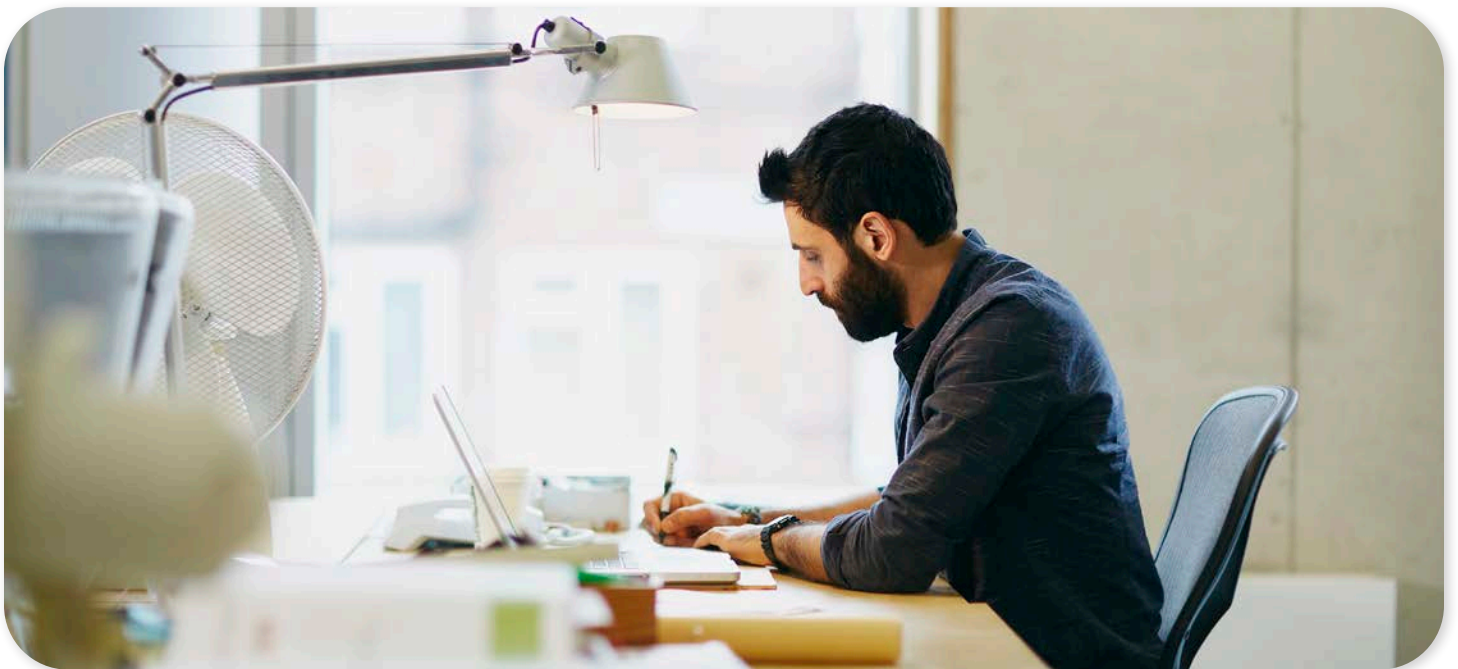
Informative papers are like a right of passage for all college students. Demonstrating this type of writing is important because you'll need to know how to conduct research as a career professional. The key to a well-crafted research essay is to have a solid thesis with credible sources to support it.

Even if you already know a lot about your topic, you'll want to use sources to support the information you're providing your readers. You want your readers to trust that your information is valid, accurate, and current. Using trustworthy sources that are either standard in the respective field or are considered credible overall will aid in building trust with your audience.

Persuasive

Argument based papers require you to take a stance on a topic. While having an opinion on a subject is why arguments are formed, that's not enough to hold an argument. You'll need to formulate a strong main claim that holds your paper together, and then you'll need research to support it. Your list of sources, along with citations, will establish your credibility.

You'll also need to know potential counter arguments and address them as a part of your strategy. The most persuasive arguments balance ethos, logos, pathos, and avoid logical fallacies. You can learn more about how to use these strategies in your writing in the article "[7 Quick Tips for Writing a Great Persuasive Essay.](#)"



4 Steps to writing an essay

Step 1: Prepare to write

You've been tasked with writing one of the papers above, and you're ready to get started.

► Pick a topic

Before you can start writing anything, you'll need a topic. If you haven't been assigned a particular topic, pick something that you're passionate about. Use the guidelines provided by your instructor to choose a topic.

► Vet your topic

Conduct some preliminary research on your topic. You may find that it's highly saturated, and you don't have much more to add. Or, you may find there's not enough information on it for you to adequately research. Either one of these could still make a great paper, just be prepared for the additional work.

► Take notes

While checking your news feed can be a quick way to power through class, it doesn't help with your note-taking skills. Be sure to take notes on your instructor's lessons. Jot down the key points and important concepts. If allowed, record the lectures. Later, you can return to add more details to your notes. And don't forget to exchange information with a classmate in case you miss a class.

Step 2: Craft an outline

So you've found a topic, and you're ready to write, but your blank document says otherwise. Get your ideas on paper with an outline.

► Formulate a thesis

Your thesis is a clear, succinct statement that captures your entire paper. It's one sentence to summarize your argument and assertion. You'll usually have an idea of this statement during the outline process, but you should revisit this once your paper is written.

► Structure your paper

Draft your outline with an introduction, conclusion, and the relevant content in between for your assignment. List major points, note any evidence you plan to use to support your points, and include any counter arguments to address for persuasive papers.



4 Steps to writing an essay (continued)

Step 3: Write your essay

It's time to turn those thoughts into a cohesive work of art. Don't worry. It's not as intimidating as it may seem.

▶ Start with your ideas

Based on your outline, start to write about each subtopic. Don't focus on using the perfect words, grammar, or subheadings, just write. Starting with your own ideas and then adding research is a good way to make sure you're not copying ideas directly from your sources, which is considered plagiarism.

▶ Add research

Using direct quotes and statistics aids in establishing credibility (ethos) into your work. Cite your sources according to the style guide (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) appropriate for your field to give credit to those great researchers before you. To do so properly, you'll need to know how to write in-text (parenthetical) citations to be included with your sentence, and the accompanying citation in your works cited or bibliography at the end of your paper. For details on how to conduct research online, using academic databases, and more, check out "[10 Tips to Improve Your Online Research](#)."

▶ Refine your frame

Once you've written the bulk of content for your paper, refine the introduction, thesis statement, and conclusion. Your introduction provides a preview of your paper, the thesis sums it up in one statement, and your conclusion is a nice recap reiterating what you just wrote. No wonder it's easiest to return to these once the paper is completely written.

Step 4: Revise, revise, and revise... again

Now that you've knocked out the bulk of the work, you're in the last stage of your paper, revision. Remember how you weren't worried about the perfect word, grammar, or subheads. Well, now it's time to get as close to perfect as you can.

▶ Edit for content

Take a look at the organization, wording, length, and overall structure of your paper. You may find that certain sections flow better in a different order or that a sentence works best at the end of a paragraph instead of the beginning. You may even find that there are holes in your content or you spent way too much talking about that one thing and should delete it. Take this time to do whatever you need to make your paper cohesive.

▶ Edit for grammar

Grammar is what most people think of when it comes to editing, and it can seem daunting. The good news is, in today's age, resources like Grammarly or Strunk and White's Element of Style will handle proofreading for you. In addition, tricks like multi-pass editing, reading your paper backwards, and changing fonts to catch errors are common techniques to find errors when your brain tries to tell you otherwise.

▶ Revise with a peer

Good writers know that good content isn't created in a vacuum. Reach out to a peer to ask them to take a look at your paper.

▶ Revise with fresh eyes

If you've started on your paper early enough, you'll have a day or two to step away from it before doing final re-reads before submission. It's amazing what your brain will catch once you've had time to step away from the content. Once you're feeling in a good place with your paper, submit it!

Well done! Your paper is written and ready to submit! Visit The Best Schools for [more tips](#) on how to write a research essay.

Essay Essentials Checklist

The golden rule of good writing is revision. Use this checklist to review the essentials one more time before submitting your paper.



In general, your paper:

- Topic meets guidelines of assignment.
- Aligns with all assignment requirements.

Your introduction:

- Opens with an attention-getter to gain interest.
- Has a clear, succinct thesis that sets the foundation for your paper.
- Addresses the research question posed, if applicable.
- Provides a preview of what the reader should expect.

Your body:

- Discusses the main topic and stays on topic.
- Asserts claims about the topic.
- Backs each claim with research-based evidence.
- Uses evidence gathered from credible sources.
- Includes in-text citations and references and an attached works cited page or bibliography.

Your conclusion:

- Flows smoothly from the body. Restates the thesis.
- Summarizes the main claims presented in the paper.
- Makes any larger connections.

You've edited:

- Content including structure, order, and length.
- Proofreading errors including sentence structure, word choice, spelling and other grammatical errors.
- By collaborating with a peer for peer revision.
- By re-reading your paper with fresh eyes.

If you've tackled the things on this list, pat yourself on the back, you're in a good place. Relax and submit your paper with confidence.

Writing creative papers: Types of creative writing

If you love to build worlds, develop stories, and create characters that engage and entertain readers, then you'll likely enjoy a creative writing assignment. Creative writing assignments help sharpen your artistic talents. These assignments could either be fiction or nonfiction writing. Regardless of genre, a good creative writing piece will need to consider the use of immersive writing techniques such as imagery, personification, motifs, and other literary elements.

Fiction vs. nonfiction

So you've been given the opportunity to flex your creative muscles for one of your courses. There are so many avenues you can explore with creative writing. Take a look at the two types of writing you'll do, and some tips to successfully execute your vision.

Creative fiction writing

Fiction is the most common type of creative writing. Fiction is imagined literature which uses literary elements to build worlds and create characters. These events could be based on actual events, but are usually not.

Creative nonfiction writing

While novels and poetry are what immediately come to mind with creative writing, creative nonfiction is also a popular genre. Creative nonfiction is based on fact, and uses literary elements to paint real-life events into creative stories.



Writing creative papers: Tips for creative writing

Study genres of writing

If you want to write for a particular genre, you will first need to read and study it. You have to know what people are doing to gain a sense of what you should be doing. Study that genre and related genres to get a sense of strategies, and keep a running bibliography of any sources for research or inspiration.

Find your voice

While it's great to have world-renown writers to aspire to, write in your own time, your own culture, and your own voice. Find a style and tone that reflects the most authentic version of yourself.

Know your audience

Carefully think about your audience, and how you expect them to handle certain narrative decisions, plot devices, or characters. Think about what you want them to experience by reading your piece, and what you want to communicate to them.

Write your piece

Start by telling a story. Don't worry about grammar, mechanics, or word choice, just get the story on paper. Be sure to be as descriptive as possible and show instead of tell your story. If your story includes characters, use your real life encounters to make them feel authentic. If you're actually writing about real-life people, use what you know about them to capture their essence on paper. Make sure your story has a solid beginning, middle, and end. Use literary elements to explore themes in your piece.

You're well on your way to crafting a well-written creative piece. Visit [15 Tips to Jumpstart Your Creative Writing](#) for additional tips on how to jumpstart your writing.

Revise, revise, and revise... again

Take a step back from your work, without emotion, and approach it with a critical eye. Be prepared to make substantial (and sometimes painful) revision in the pursuit of great literature.

► Edit for content

Take a look at the organization, wording, length, and overall structure of your paper. You may find that certain sections flow better in a different order or that a sentence works best at the end of a paragraph instead of the beginning. You may even find that there are holes in your content or you spent way too much talking about that one thing and should delete it. Take this time to do whatever you need to make your paper cohesive.

► Edit for grammar

Grammar is what most people think of when it comes to editing, and it can seem daunting. The good news is, in today's age, resources like Grammarly or Strunk and White's *Element of Style* will handle proofreading for you. In addition, tricks like multi-pass editing, reading your paper backwards, and changing fonts to catch errors are common techniques to find errors when your brain tries to tell you otherwise.

► Revise with a peer

Good writers know that good content isn't created in a vacuum. Reach out to a peer to ask them to take a look at your paper.

► Revise with fresh eyes

If you've started on your paper early enough, you'll have a day or two to step away from it before doing final re-reads before submission. It's amazing what your brain will catch once you've had time to step away from the content. Once you're feeling in a good place with your paper, submit it!