

# **Guidelines for Writing a Basic Academic Paper**

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Here's how to write a basic academic paper. These guidelines can also be used when writing an essay, opinion piece, cover letter, or blog entry – in other words, any non-fiction piece of writing that's simpler than a research paper.

## **1. First Draft**

Your paper should have an introduction, 3 or more main points, and a conclusion.

- First, introduce your topic and briefly mention your main points.
- Next, write one or more paragraphs for each main point.
- Finally, write a conclusion. This is very similar to your introduction, but rephrased using different words. This may seem redundant, but that's how this type of writing is done.

## **2. Second Draft**

Edit your paper by doing the following:

- Do a spelling check.
- Look through and make sure when you use the word "I" that it's always capitalized.
- Check that proper nouns (names of people, places, and titles) are capitalized.
- Look for run-on sentences and split them into shorter sentences.
- Make sure each sentence starts with a capital and ends with punctuation (. ! or ?).
- Read your paper out loud to see if it makes sense. If something doesn't "sound right," adjust it.

## **3. Get An Edit**

Ask someone else to look over your paper. They should help you with two things:

- First, they should help you correct any remaining spelling or grammar issues. If there are lots of these, they may have you go through step 2 again.
- Next, they should offer suggestions about the content of your paper – how to improve it or make it more clear. They should make sure you've covered each of your main points.
- Remember to thank your editor.

## **4. Final Version**

You're almost done!

- If needed, update your paper by making the changes suggested by your editor.
- Go through step 2 again, including reading your paper aloud.
- You're done! Save a copy and then share it with your instructor.