

How to Carve Out a Good Paper

By Abi Burk & Jaak Koiva

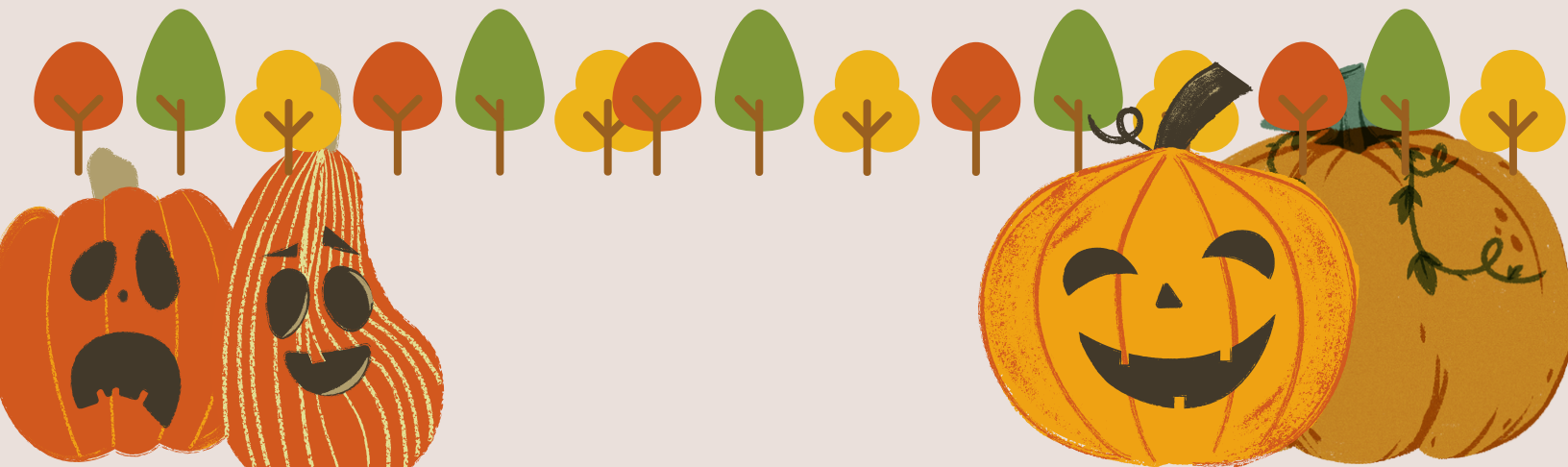
Step-By-Step Ideas to Build Your Paper to a Finished Idea



- 1. Find your idea**
- 2. Research your idea**
- 3. Create your outline**
- 4. Begin writing your rough draft**
- 5. Edit your rough draft**
- 6. Give it one last read-over**
- 7. Turn it in!**



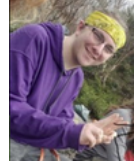
Keep reading for an even more detailed plan!



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Step-By-Step Ideas to Build Your Paper to a Finished Idea



1. Find your idea
 - 1.1. Brainstorm what exactly you want to write your paper about.
 - 1.1.1. This can be through research, personal interest, or even talking to others in your class.
 - 1.2. Refine your idea to fit the parameters of the rubric
 - 1.2.1. Is the assignment supposed to be specific or broad? Is the length requirement enough to fit your topic or is it too short?
 - 1.3. Create a rough thesis sentence.
 - 1.3.1. This can change as you find your evidence, but having a rough idea of what you want to write about can help you guide your research.
2. Research your idea
 - 2.1. Find appropriate sources for your idea
 - 2.1.1. I.E., if this is a scientific paper, you are going to want a peer-reviewed scientific paper. If it is a persuasive essay, you will want more “charged” sources, such as newspapers and other online posts.
 - 2.2. Make sure you have enough sources to not only meet the rubric requirements, but to write a well-rounded paper.
 - 2.2.1. Too few sources can leave you scraping for information, and it can often cause your paper to become repetitive.
 - 2.3. Create correct citations for your sources BEFORE writing the paper.
 - 2.3.1. This leaves less work at the end as you try to discern your sources and makes inputting in-text citations much easier.
3. Create your outline
 - 3.1. Use something like bullet points or a numbered list to create the skeleton of your paper.
 - 3.1.1. Put every heading/topic you need to cover within this outline (I.E., introduction, methods, results, discussion, conclusion).
 - 3.2. Add in the information that goes into each section underneath its corresponding heading.
 - 3.2.1. This will also help you to see what sections have too much information/not enough information.
 - 3.2.2. Make sure you are keeping track of where you are pulling information from; it makes the citation process much easier, and you are less likely to accidentally plagiarize.
 - 3.3. Keep this outline either beside you or down on the sheet as you begin writing your paper.
 - 3.3.1. This way, you can reference this as you begin writing to maintain structure and flow.



WAIT...THERE'S MORE!

4. Begin writing your rough draft
 - 4.1. Using your outline, start laying out the information whilst adding "padding".
 - 4.1.1. This padding is things like transitions, introductions and conclusions to each paragraph, and other things that will help your paper to flow.
 - 4.2. Periodically check that the order of information makes sense.
 - 4.2.1. Reread your work as you write. (I.E., Does it make sense to have this information before this part, or does it make more sense to have it afterwards? Does this sentence transition my ideas well?)
 - 4.3. Remember that this is called a rough draft for a reason.
 - 4.3.1. It is not the finished product, and it can always be edited later! Walk away from your work for a bit before you sit down to start revisions.
5. Edit your rough draft.
 - 5.1. Start by highlighting areas that need to be reworded, moved around, or taken out.
 - 5.1.1. You can also print out a copy and physically make edits in the margins if that works better for you.
 - 5.1.2. Reading the paper out loud can also help you hear grammatical errors/flow issues that don't look out of place when reading.
 - 5.2. Have a friend or the professor read over the paper.
 - 5.2.1. Always reach out and see if your professor is willing to read over your work and make suggestions. They are the ones grading it after all!
 - 5.2.1.1. Just make sure you ask with ample time before the due date. DO NOT email them the night of to ask them to proofread.
 - 5.2.2. You can also ask your friend if you can proofread theirs if they are in the same course.
 - 5.2.2.1. This can help you see what other people are writing about/how they are writing it and help you to edit your own.
 - 5.3. Take these suggestions and start working them in to your paper.
 - 5.3.1. You can even make a copy of the document so that you can compare the rough draft to your working edit.
6. Give it one last read over
 - 6.1. If you have given yourself enough time, leave the paper for a day or two and come back with fresh eyes.
 - 6.1.1. Looking at a paper for too long, especially one you have written, can leave you less likely to see errors.
 - 6.2. Compare your paper to the rubric.
 - 6.2.1. Are you hitting the specific outlines needed to get the best score possible?
 - 6.2.2. Make sure if the professor explicitly stated something that it is included/excluded.
 - 6.3. Run it through a plagiarism checking site/Grammarly-type site.
 - 6.3.1. These can make sure that all grammar and citations are correct, as these are easy points you don't want to lose!
7. Turn it in!
 - 7.1. Check the submission formatting and save it appropriately.
 - 7.1.1. I.E., PDF, Word doc, etc.
 - 7.2. Save the document with an appropriate title as well.
 - 7.2.1. I like to include my initials in the document title (I.E. If the paper is John Doe's midterm paper for chemistry, he might title it "Chemistry I Midterm JD").
 - 7.3. Upload and relax!
 - 7.3.1. You did it! Now you wait for your grade and the submission comments
 - 7.3.1.1. Even when the assignment is done, always read the comments made on your submission. It could be something you can use for later assignments to improve your writing (and grade!).

