

Research Paper 101 Series

Step Six: Writing your Rough Draft

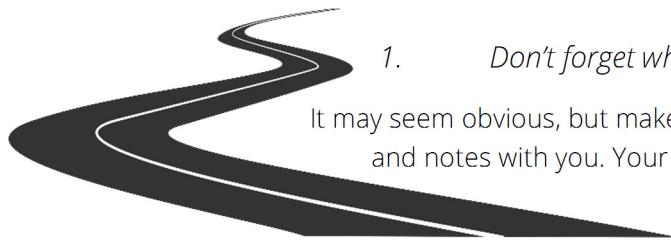
Writer's block! You have reams of information in your head, but how do you get it out on paper? How do you grab your reader's attention in your introduction? How do you get your paragraphs to flow? Relax! Your rough draft is part of the process. It does not have to be perfect; it just has to be done.



Relax! Don't aim for perfection in your rough draft. It is one step in a process.

Writing is a personal process. If you talk to those who write frequently, each one will follow a different pattern. Some writers prefer to write from beginning to end. Some skip around from section to section. Others write the introduction and conclusion last. There is no "right" way to write your rough draft.

The important thing is that you write.

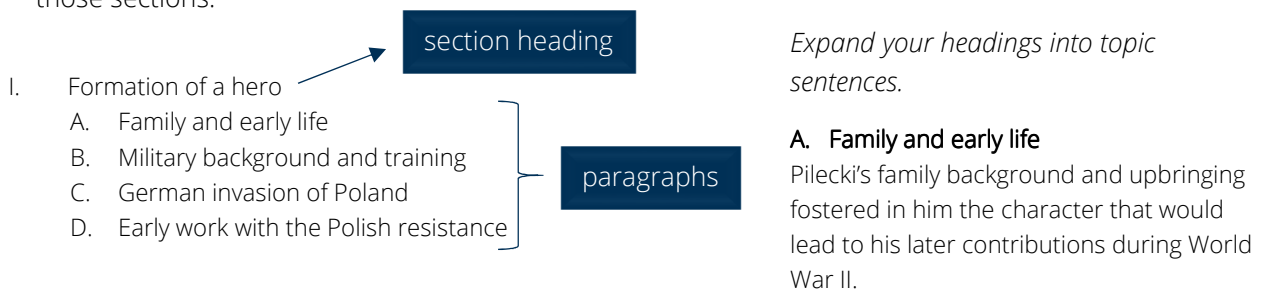


1. *Don't forget where you are going*

It may seem obvious, but make sure you have your thesis statement, outline, and notes with you. Your thesis statement and outline are your road map.

2. *Think about paragraphs*

Think about your outline in terms of paragraphs. For a longer research paper, your main points (I, II, III, etc.) will be section headings. Your first layer of subpoints (A, B, C, etc.) will be paragraphs within those sections.



Your topic sentences should in some manner reflect your thesis statement. Each paragraph should then be supported with evidence and examples from your research.

Don't be a slave to your outline. If you are writing and realize that you have far more information on a topic than you can cover in a single paragraph, expand it into two (or more) paragraphs.

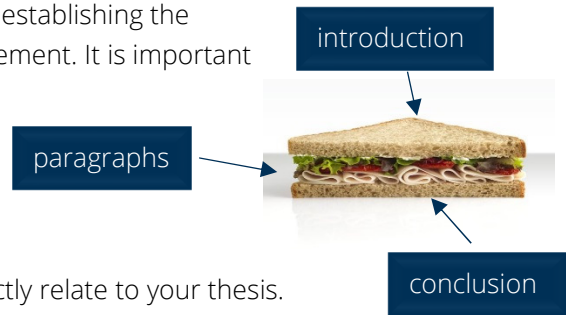
3. *Introduction and conclusion*

The introduction and conclusion can be the hardest parts of a paper to write. They are the bread that hold the fillings (paragraphs) of your paper together.

An **introduction** typically begins with a broad overview, establishing the context for your topic, concluding with your thesis statement. It is important to catch your reader's attention. You can do this with

- specific facts,
- a key quote,
- a question, or
- an example.

However you choose to capture attention, it must directly relate to your thesis.



Your **conclusion** must bring a sense of closure to your paper. Be careful not to add a new point. This is the time to summarize rather than to present new ideas.

You can close of your argument by

- reiterating words or phrases used in your introduction,
- choosing a quotation that emphasized your thesis or gives it a different perspective,
- using a sentence that is parallel in structure to one used in the introduction
- providing a larger context for your argument,
- redefining key terms of your argument, or
- considering the larger implications of your argument.

However, a conclusion is not a simple summary. It is your final chance to drive your main point home. Avoid using phrases like “in conclusion,” “to conclude,” or “in summary.” Subtle is better.

4. *Cite your sources*

Make sure you are citing sources in your rough draft. You must cite whenever you are referencing information that is not your own or not common knowledge. Check the proper format guide (<https://www.mybriercrest.ca/college/documents/>) or the resource “**Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism**” for further guidance.

5. *Overcoming writer's block*

The struggle is real. You sit and stare at a white sheet of “paper” on your computer screen. The words just don't seem to want to pour out of you. What can you do?

- ⇒ **Jot down any ideas and phrases as they occur to you.** Don't worry about paragraphs and sentences for the moment. Use bullet points, flow charts, arrows, pictures, etc. Focus on getting something down before you forget it.
- ⇒ **Write anything** that comes to mind about your topic for ten minutes without stopping. Write “blah, blah, blah” if you need to. See what ideas you uncover.
- ⇒ If you feel blocked on one section of your paper, **skip to another section.**
- ⇒ If you can't figure out the “right” way to say something, **write down what you mean.** You can smooth it out when the solution comes to you.

6. *A word about formatting*

You can format now or when you revise your paper. A valuable resource in addition to the Briercrest format guides (<https://www.mybriercrest.ca/college/documents/>) is the Purdue Owl (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html).

Next up...Revising and Editing

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