

Preparing for a Writing Assignment

With small changes to your teaching, you can take advantage of the benefits that multilingual students bring to your class. Nearly half of Mason students are multilingual, and they have different levels of fluency. However, the strategies below are designed to help you support both multilingual and other students.

If you have an essay coming due and you're wondering where to begin, here are some things you can do to get started on that paper.

First things first: read the instructions more than once.

It's obvious but still worth mentioning. If you haven't yet read your assignment's instructions, read them. If you've already read them, read them again. Ask your instructor for clarifications if you don't understand something in the instructions.

Do a little each day.

A deadline that's two weeks away seems far, but it's not. By the time you brainstorm, find and read sources, reflect on the sources' ideas, and then start writing, a week or more could have gone by. So, break down your writing into days and do something each day. Even just 30 minutes today makes a big difference for tomorrow.

Talk to your instructor.

It helps to ask your instructor if you don't understand the instructions. However, you can also talk to them about your ideas and the research you're finding. Use their office hours.

Don't worry about the right way to start writing. Just start.

Some prefer to outline while others prefer to free-write and revise as they go. Some start with an introduction; others begin in the middle with a body paragraph. Whatever approach you choose, just start!

Plan to visit the Writing Center.

Getting feedback on your paper before submitting it is great! Plan to visit the Writing Center prior to submitting your paper. Do this at least 3 days before your paper is due so that you have time to revise.

For more information, visit the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
www.stearnscenter.gmu.edu