1. **Choose your topic/develop your thesis statement** – Make sure your topic is broad enough to find enough information, but narrow enough to really explore that specific issue. If you’re unsure if your topic is appropriate, discuss it with your professor – they can often offer insight and hints to find the right topic for you.

2. **Do the research** – Find information (from reputable sources – NO WIKIPEDIA!) to support your topic and thesis – what do you want your paper to say?

   ***Good rule of thumb – if the number of sources needed is not given in the assignment, try to have at least 1 per page (e.g. if it is a 10 page paper, have at least 10 sources)***

3. **Write an outline** – Now that you have a good understanding of the subject, it’s time to narrow down your main arguments and ensure you have adequate evidence to support them. Listing your main ideas will help with the writing process by keeping you on track and allowing you to see your progress as you write.

4. **Write your introduction** – This is where you will introduce the reader to your paper. It should be concise (keep it to a ½ page) and should give the reader all of the information they need to understand the rest of your paper. Things to include: justification for the paper (why is this topic important?), any definitions (e.g. the definition of youth can vary, so be sure to outline the definition you are using), your main arguments, and your thesis statement.

5. **Support your main arguments** – The body of your paper will be comprised of your main arguments with the supporting information from your research. If you are writing a long paper (more than 5 pages or so), you may want to use headings to organize your
paper – this helps you as you write to stay on track, and can help the reader follow along. For long papers, each argument should have its own heading, followed by sub-headings for each supporting idea – for example, if my main argument was exploring benefits of outlining your papers, organization, clarity, and time management may be used as sub-headings.

6. **Conclusion** – Your conclusion should be concise and offer a summation of the paper. This is where you will reiterate your main arguments to show how you proved your thesis statement. Do not introduce any new material in your conclusion; it is simply there to recap what you’ve already said.

7. **Edit, Edit, Edit!** – Now that the hardest part is over, give yourself a break; walk away from the computer for a day to rest your brain. After a day or so, come back to your paper to re-read it; this will allow you to see it with fresh eyes which makes it more likely that you’ll pick up on mistakes. Have a friend read it over, take it to the Writing Resource Center, ask a family member to look at it – the more, the better!

**Thesis Statement – What Is It?**

A thesis statement is a sentence in an essay, report, research paper, or speech that identifies the main idea and/or central purpose of the text. The thesis statement serves as the organizing principle of the text and usually appears in the introductory paragraph, often at the end.

Examples: *Diwali is an important festival for Indians because they celebrate, remember traditional legends, and enjoy time with their families.*

*Widely ridiculed as escape reading, romance novels are important as a proving ground for many never-before-published writers and, more significantly, as a showcase for strong heroines.*

**Elements of a Good Paragraph**

A good paragraph contains:

a. *Topic Sentence* introducing the idea you plan to explore in the paragraph
b. 5-7 *Sentences* including an example and analysis of the example or topic
c. *Closing Sentence* that summarizes your "take home message" from the paragraph (and possibly link to next paragraph).
d. *Indent; Spelling and Punctuation*