A Guide On How To:

Plan A Long-Range Assignment

- How can I plan?
- How much do I need?
- Where can I find research?
Planning Long-Range Assignments

Good, strong evidence is the heart of a good, strong research paper.

How can I plan my research?

Workers in the technical fields often use reverse engineering to plan a major project, and the same concept can be used for a long-range assignment. A fixed plan will help make sure you have enough time to complete each step in the process.

1) **Brainstorm and list the tasks** that will be required to complete the project.
   a) Break apart each deadline into tasks.
   b) **Create your own** deadlines and tasks if they aren’t specified by your instructor.

2) Estimate how much **time** each will take. Use your past experiences and the assignment requirements to make your estimate.

3) **Double that estimate** to cover for tasks that may take longer than you expect, unforeseen problems, or if you find you need to make a major change.

4) Create a **schedule of tasks**, both long-term (monthly) and short-term (weekly). Begin with the date the assignment is due, and **work backwards** to make a plan. Write the instructor-given deadlines and the listed tasks in your daily **homework calendar**.

5) Start your project right away, and **check off** each task as you complete it.

The following is an example of a plan for writing a research essay, and uses the writing process to determine the tasks:
How can I plan to read a novel?

As with long-range assignments, instructors often include **deadlines** for chapters or page numbers with novel assignments. Write these deadlines in your **homework calendar**, and **divide** the **number of pages by the number of days** you have to read them. Then, write the **corresponding page numbers** into your daily homework **schedule**.

For example, the book *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* is roughly 325 pages. If you have 60 days to finish reading, you can plan your reading by dividing it into daily reading tasks:

325 pages ÷ 60 days = about 6 pages per day

Write each page task into your daily homework schedule, and **check off** each as you complete it.

How can I keep to my plan?

Students often procrastinate starting a long-term assignment because the due date seems so far off that students may think there’s plenty of time to begin. As a result, students begin a project too late to devote sufficient time to create a quality project, and their grade ultimately suffers.

• Take the time to clarify what the **real purpose** of the assignment is.

• Anticipate and write any **concerns** about the project down and take action to prevent those concerns from becoming reality.
• Categorize your tasks by **priority** and code them in your planner.

• **Plan** work sessions that work best with the time of day, duration, and location that are **most productive** to you.

**Are there any tools I can use to help me plan?**

A daily homework **calendar** can provide a convenient, physical copy of what needs to be done and what was completed.

There are also **electronic tools** that are useful for planning long-range assignments. Microsoft Office offers several programs for listing, organizing, and scheduling tasks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excel</td>
<td>Tables, charts, and graphs easily organize details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OneNote</td>
<td>Organize to-do lists, meeting notes, and Webpages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Delegate and keep track of tasks done as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook</td>
<td>Microsoft’s e-mail program; includes a calendar and task list feature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Additionally, several **colleges and universities** offer planning tools on their respective Websites, such as the University of Minnesota’s Assignment Calculator (http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/), or Dunwoody’s Weekly Calendar download (http://www.dunwoody.edu/elftmann/resources/).

**References**


**Contact Us**

**Teresa Milligan**
studentsuccess@dunwoody.edu
612-381-3398
dunwoody.edu/studentsuccess