

# The **WRITING** CENTER

**Elftmann Student  
Success Center**

**A Guide On  
How To:**

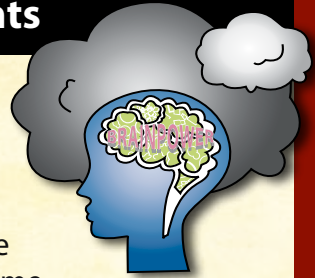
## **Plan A Long-Range Assignment**

- 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:

April						
Sun.	M	T	W	Th	F	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 Explore & narrow topic	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Browse internet for resources	21
22	23 Check for library resources	24	25	26 Check for other resources	27	28
29	30 Decide which resources to use as references					

May						
Sun.	M	T	W	Th	F	Sat.
29	30	1	2 Take notes from sources	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Take notes from sources	10	11	12 Take notes from sources
13	14	15	16 Finish research	17	18 Write rough draft	19
20	21	22 Revise draft	23	24	25	26
27 Revise final draft	28	29 Final draft	30 <b>Paper Due</b>	31		

## 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:

$325 \text{ pages} \div 60 \text{ days} = \text{about } 6 \text{ pages per day}$

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:

- Excel – tables, charts, and graphs easily organize details
- OneNote – organize to-do lists, meeting notes, and Webpages
- Project – delegate and keep track of tasks done as a group
- Outlook - Microsoft's e-mail program; includes a calendar and task list feature

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

- Driscoll, Dana Lynn, & Stolley, Karl. (2010). Research Overview. Purdue owl. Retrieved March 16, 2011, from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/552/01/>
- Harvey, Michael. (2003). The nuts and bolts of college writing. Retrieved from <http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/arguments.htm>

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