

SUGGESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS GET STARTED*

1. **SET A TIMETABLE.** Start as early as possible and set realistic time periods for completion of your project. Attempt to work on the project regularly. Leave plenty of time at the end of the project for revisions.
2. **CHOOSE A TOPIC.** Decide on a general topic of interest. Example: “Depression.”
3. **CONDUCT PRELIMINARY RESEARCH (REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE).**
4. **NARROW YOUR TOPIC.** Example: Narrow “depression” to “depression during childhood” or “adolescent depression and suicide.”
5. **MAKE AN OUTLINE.**
6. **WRITE A QUICK FIRST DRAFT.** This shouldn’t be a perfect draft. Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Focus on expressing your ideas.
7. **REVISE.** Read your first draft carefully and ask yourself:
 - How well does each paragraph support the main idea?
 - Do details in each paragraph support the main or dominant idea?
 - Have I used resources to back up my ideas?
 - Is my evidence convincing?
 - Is my evidence incorporated into the paper effectively?
 - Are all sources acknowledged?
 - Are paragraphs in a logical order?
 - Are details within each paragraph in a logical order?
 - Are transitions between ideas smooth?
8. **HAVE A READER RESPOND TO THE DRAFT.** Faculty are often happy to read and respond to your paper but must limit their involvement to an advisory role only in order for your paper to be eligible for the contest. Your fellow students or even family members may also be effective reviewers. Ask for their honest opinions about improvements for the paper.
9. **REVISE.** Carefully consider making changes in this draft based on the readers’ responses.
10. **EDIT.** Finally, make sure that your paper is clear, easy to read, and free of errors.

*While these suggestions pertain to topics of a clinical nature, they may be applied to other formats, such as essays on medical topics, clinical review articles, evidence-based reviews of a clinical question, and reports of original research projects.

Get Started Today! You Can Be A Winner!