Developing a Research Schedule

Writing a research paper can be a daunting task. Understanding the task, knowing how to do the research, keeping track of and using your research, and then writing the paper can be overwhelming if you aren't organized. Here are some tips for planning and creating a research schedule that will help you stay on track.

Set a tentative schedule as soon as the assignment is given. The sooner you start planning, the sooner you can start doing research and writing your paper. Also, the more prep work you do, the easier later tasks (like writing, editing, and preparing a bibliography) will be.

Break the assignment up into manageable blocks. There is a lot involved in writing a research paper. When you break up any large assignment into manageable and meaningful blocks, you can concentrate on each task and each block without trying to tackle the whole assignment at once. The "Example Research Schedule" shows one way to break up an assignment.

Give yourself extra time in case of unexpected surprises. Remember that things can come up that might throw off your plan. Your computer might crash, you might have to work more hours, or there could be a family emergency.

Using the "Example Research Schedule"

Adapt to your assignment, own needs, and timeframe. This research schedule is just an *example*. Figure out what works best for your needs and for the particular assignment.

Block divisions and tasks are not fixed and definite. Recognize that block divisions are not fixed and some tasks will be repeated over more than one block (such as seeing your instructor or tutor, evaluating sources, and making revisions). Each block should roughly take about a week to complete, but tasks and blocks will overlap. If you finish one block early, move on to leave yourself time for later tasks.

Example Research Schedule

Date assigned: **Rough draft due:**

                                                      Date final draft is due:

Block 1: Getting started	Complete by _____
• Understand the assignment and requirements. • Select a topic or narrow a given topic. • Determine the preliminary types of sources to use. • Do preliminary research to discover the	Notes:

important issues. • Organize research findings in computer files, note cards, and/or a research journal. • Write a purpose statement or research question. • See your instructor and/or a tutor to clarify any questions you have about the assignment.	
Block 2: Reading, researching, and evaluating sources	**Complete by** _____
• Find print and online sources. • Annotate and evaluate the sources. • Write summaries and paraphrases and make notes. • Set up a working bibliography.	Notes:
Block 3: Planning and drafting	**Complete by** _____
• Formulate a working thesis • Write a proposal and/or a scratch outline. • Write a first draft.	Notes:
Block 4: Evaluating the draft and getting feedback	**Complete by** _____
• Put the draft away for a day or two – but continue collecting useful sources. • Outline the draft and evaluate its logic and completeness. • Plan more research as necessary to fill any gaps. • Get feedback from instructor, classmates, and tutor.	Notes:
Block 5: Revising, preparing list of works cited, editing, presenting	**Complete by** _____
• Revise the draft. • Prepare a list of works cited/references/bibliography. • Design the format of the paper. • Edit. • Proofread the final draft.	Notes:

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Adapted from *Universal Keys for Writers* by Ann Raimes