

Campus Academic Resource Program

Developing a Research Schedule

This handout will cover the following:

- Outline initial guidelines for creating your research plan.
- Offer a tentative timeline for each step of a research project.
- Provide a chart for breaking down a project into manageable parts.

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—especially without organization. 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. The more preparation you do, the easier later tasks—such as writing, editing, and preparing a bibliography—will be. You can start thinking of larger topics you might be interested in researching when you see the assignment on the syllabus, and think of more concrete ideas and questions when your instructor gives you a prompt or goes over the assignment in detail later on in the course.

Schedule a time to meet with your professor to answer any questions you may have. If you are having any difficulty with the research project—whether it be narrowing down your topic or finding sources—or just want some additional support, it is useful to meet with your professor early on. Come with a list of questions or concerns you may have, or material you have used for brainstorming. Your professor will be able to tell you whether or not you are on the right track, quell anxieties you may have, or spark new directions in which to take your research. Feel free to schedule additional appointment(s) should you find that you need more guidance.

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 without trying to tackle the whole assignment at once. The example research schedules in this handout show you two ways to break up an assignment.

Give yourself extra time for the unexpected. As much as you carefully detail your research schedule, remember that you cannot plan for the unexpected. A computer crash, unexpected work hours, or a family emergency could throw off your plans. Give yourself enough time to tackle these challenges that may arise by spreading out the amount of tasks you assign yourself for a single day or over the course of a week. That way, should you need to move a library visit or a rough draft deadline, it does not wildly interfere with your final deadline. Remember to not be too hard on yourself if things do not go as you had planned.

Research Schedule

Giving yourself a tentative research schedule is important to put the timeline of your project into focus. If you have a general concept of how long the process will take, you will be better able to plan the rest of your life and academic responsibilities around it, so you do not end up rushing your work in the few days before your rough draft or final draft is due. On pages 2 and 3 of this packet, you will find an example of a research timeline. This provides a checklist of all that you will need to prepare for any final or subsequent drafts of a research assignment. Feel free to add any additional

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requirements you may have for your research project, or remove any that are not applicable. You will find a blank template of this schedule on page 5 of this handout.

Example:

Date assigned: January 26

Rough draft due: March 1

Date final draft is due: March 16

<p>Block 1: Getting started</p>	<p>Complete by _February 12_____</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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. 	<p>Notes: Meet with Prof. Johnson again with more focused thesis for approval.</p>
<p>Block 2: Reading, researching, and evaluating sources</p>	<p>Complete by _____</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find print and online sources. • Annotate and evaluate the sources. • Write summaries and paraphrases and make notes. • Set up a working bibliography. 	<p>Notes:</p>
<p>Block 3: Planning and drafting</p>	<p>Complete by _____</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate a working thesis • Write a proposal and/or a scratch outline. • Write a first draft. 	<p>Notes:</p>
<p>Block 4: Evaluating the draft and getting feedback</p>	<p>Complete by _____</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>Notes:</p>

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Block 5: Revising, preparing list of works cited, editing, presenting	Complete by _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the draft. • Prepare a list of works cited/references/bibliography. • Design the format of the paper. • Edit. • Proofread the final draft. 	Notes:

Adapted from *Universal Keys for Writers* by Ann Raimes.

Breaking Down a Project into Manageable Parts

You might find it useful to create an additional research schedule for yourself for the week or more leading up to your due date. Since you have already created a larger timeline for yourself, breaking your project down further into more specific parts can work as a short-term to-do list. This may also be useful in the context of your existing weekly schedule, so you can estimate the amount of time it will take to complete a task and find the most opportune moments in your week to complete them. You can find a blank version of these tables on page 6 of this handout.

Steps to Complete the Project

Steps	Estimated Time
Example: Write introduction and conclusion	4 hours
Organize works cited page	1 hour

Steps for Completing the Project in a Week

	Steps	Time	Completed
Monday	Example: Write rough draft of introduction.	1 hour	x
	Read introduction with body paragraphs for flow; edit.	1 hour	x

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Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Monday			

For more information on weekly schedules and breaking down a project, see our “Time Management and Self-Care” handout at carp.sfsu.edu.

Date assigned:

Rough draft due:

Date final draft is due:

Block 1:	Complete by
	Notes:
Block 2:	Complete by
	Notes:
Block 3:	Complete by

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	Notes:
Block 4:	Complete by
	Notes:
Block 5:	Complete by
	Notes:

Steps to Complete the Project

Steps	Estimated Time

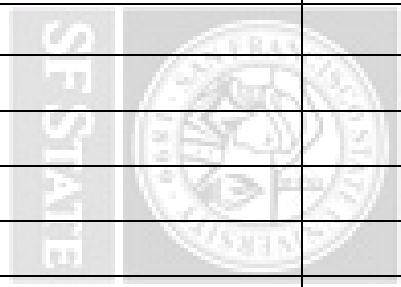
Steps for Completing the Project in a Week

	Steps	Time	Completed
Monday			
Tuesday			

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Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Monday			

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Works Cited

Raimes, Anne. *Universal Keys for Writers*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. Print.



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