

BEFORE YOU WRITE

- ☐ Read the prompt and rubric twice; underline every required element.
- ☐ Write the question your paper answers in one sentence.
- ☐ Gather credible sources and note page numbers as you read.
- ☐ Sketch an outline: thesis, 3–5 main points, and the evidence for each.
- ☐ Note the due date, required length, and citation style.

INTRODUCTION

- ☐ Opens with context that leads to your topic (no dictionary definitions).
- ☐ Narrows to the specific issue or question.
- ☐ Ends with a clear, arguable thesis that previews your main points.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

- ☐ Each starts with a topic sentence that supports the thesis.
- ☐ Evidence (quote, paraphrase, or data) is introduced and cited.
- ☐ Your analysis explains how the evidence proves the point.
- ☐ A transition links each paragraph to the next.
- ☐ At least one counterargument is addressed and answered.

CONCLUSION

- ☐ Restates the thesis in new words.
- ☐ Synthesizes the main points; it does not just list them.
- ☐ Answers “so what?” with an implication or next step. No new evidence.

CITATIONS AND SOURCES

- ☐ Every quote, paraphrase, and statistic has an in-text citation.
- ☐ Every in-text citation matches an entry in the reference list.
- ☐ The style (APA, MLA, or Chicago) matches the assignment.

FORMAT AND FINAL PROOFREAD

- ☐ Margins, font, spacing, page numbers, and title or heading follow the style guide.
- ☐ Read the paper aloud to catch missing words and awkward sentences.
- ☐ Check spelling of names, terms, and titles; run a spell check last.
- ☐ Confirm length, file type, and file name before you submit.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- ☐ A thesis that names a topic but makes no argument.
- ☐ Paragraphs that summarize sources instead of analyzing them.
- ☐ Quotes dropped in with no introduction or explanation.
- ☐ The same word or sentence opening repeated again and again.