Student Resources Worksheets

# Suggested Calendars

Because students may use this book for multiple types of papers, including but not limited to a semester-long course paper, year-long thesis, or even a multiyear thesis, giving precise timings for finishing a draft of each part of the paper is difficult. Still, knowing a relative timeline is useful for keeping you moving, especially for those of you who are working on this project with primarily self-imposed deadlines (i.e., without multiple, intermediate due dates from a faculty member) along the way. The table below gives you both, and it should look familiar to you. It is simply Table 1.1 (pp. 8–9, reprinted from the book) which provides a brief and full overview of what you need to do and approximately when you should finish. Thereafter, you have more detail and specific suggested calendars for completing each of the sections.

**Research Paper: Tasks to Be Accomplished, Sections, and Suggested Calendar**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Tasks | **Sections/Assignment** | *Suggested* Calendar |
| (1) **Develop** a “good” topic or, more accurately, **a good** research **question** and **find** excellent, related scholarly sources. | Annotated Bibliography | At the outset, refine over the first third |
| (2) **Identify, classify, explain, and evaluate** the most important **scholarly answers** to that question and (3) **assert a thesis**. | Annotated Bibliography  Literature Review | By end of first half, add sources, revise ideas throughout process |
| (4) **Assert a clear thesis** with its constituent claims or **develop a model and hypothesis** that follow directly from the argument. | Model and Hypothesis | By end of first half of course, sharpen argument and assertions throughout |
| (5) **Revise** and(6) **Edit** | All sections | Throughout, with an intense effort in the last phase |
| (7) **Plan the study**, with attention to defining and selecting appropriate cases and methods for analysis, creating usable operational definitions of concepts and strategies for their knowing values, identifying data sources, developing instruments for generating data (if necessary), and explaining methodology. In addition, **justify** this plan and **recognize** its potential flaws. | Research Design | Half to a third of the way through |
| (8) **Evaluate the hypothesis or thesis** across the chosen cases; present evidence in effective ways so that you and the reader can easily follow why you have reached your judgments on the applicability of your argument for your cases. | Analysis and Assessment | Last half |
| **Write** (9) **a Conclusion** that reminds the reader of the findings, discusses why these results emerged, and suggests paths for future research,(10) **an Introduction** that introduces the reader to the issue and question inspiring you, asserts a clearly stated thesis that answers that query, and provides an overview of the paper, and (11) **a Title** that conveys your argument and your findings in a brief and inviting way. | Conclusion Introduction  Title | Final Phase |
| (12) **Create an abstract** and **presentation**. While these two elements are often not required, they can be enormously beneficial. The **abstract** is a paragraph summary of the whole project that appears on papers or posters presented at conferences. The **presentation** highlights the research you have done, important choices you have made, and your findings, with special attention to the “packaging.” Both inspire a holistic look at the project, aiding the final revisions. | Abstract Presentation | Final Phase |

**Calendar: Research Question**

**See Finding a Topic and Generating Questions Worksheet**

You can never start working on your Research Question too early, and I recommend you to *begin in the first week* of the project. Most important is to take the process of developing one (notice my precise language—nothing about settling on a question is automatic) seriously, using the various techniques of the chapter to help you. Pay close attention to detail, especially to the wording of the question. You want to use the “right” kind of interrogatory and keep your hunch about what is important in understanding your phenomenon out of your question. *While you will be refining your question through the first half of the course*, you need to settle on a basic, general concept and question—that is, why is polarization so great in the United States today? Why has immigration reform not passed, despite widespread public support? Why did uprisings occur throughout the Middle East in 2011? How was the move toward more democratic politics possible in Tunisia but not in Egypt?—as early as possible so that you can move forward on your Annotated Bibliography.

**Calendar: Annotated Bibliography**

**See Resources for AB Worksheet**

Follow your professor’s instructions, but typically you will want to complete the AB at a relatively early stage, say about *a third of the way to your deadline*. The book has repeatedly emphasized: the quality of the overall paper is only as good as its foundation. Here, that theoretical background is crucial, so do not skimp on this stage. When you write your AB draft, pay careful attention to format, understanding the argument, paraphrasing, and carefully noting page numbers. Realize, too, that even after you have handed in or finished this basic assignment, you will continue reading relevant materials, and you will engage in a similar thinking and analytic process to be able to integrate your new sources effectively into your paper. Recognize that you will likely come back to your classification scheme, rethink some elements of it, and include more sources through the first half of the process, while you are spiraling regarding your fundamental notions. You should continue to sharpen your ideas, better label and group your works, and improve your understanding of all your sources and how they are related to each other.

**Calendar: Literature Review**

**See LR Examples in Text as Well as in Posted Papers**

Because your Literature Review establishes the excellent scholarly foundation for your paper, you will be continually adding to and improving it throughout your project. *The first half* of your time on the paper will be the period of intense attention to the LR. Take this period seriously, as it will help you to have a great understanding of the concept you are studying and how and why scholars explain and understand it differently. This knowledge will be invaluable later on when you develop not only your Model and Hypothesis, but also the Research Design.

**Calendar: Model and Hypothesis**

**See Thesis, Model, and Hypothesis (TMH) Worksheet**

Like the LR, the Thesis and its sub-points and the M&H should be done by about the halfway point to your final due date. Technically, the LR will be completed first, and then you will advance your thesis or model and hypothesis, but as you have seen with our students, much thinking and refinement (related to the LR and what you are asserting) occurs as you work through your contention and sub-points or diagram and argument. Moreover, the work you do on precisely stating what you are asserting compel to adjustments in the LR. Use the TMH worksheet here to help you; it will be an excellent guide. In a noncausal paper, the thesis is a first start, but you must break it down into its constituent elements. If you can’t after consulting the handout, then get some extra help. For a causal or correlational argument, if you cannot identify a model and/or express a hypothesis, then you know that you have not properly done your literature review and you need some help. That’s a great time to go see your professor. When you do, bring your work, so your instructor can see exactly what you have been thinking and can better help you. Then, once you have the basic inputs—the actual flow diagram and the statement of how the variables are related to each other—then you can easily write the section. Remember the M&H *section* is different from the model and hypothesis, but it, of course, contains both with it.

**Calendar: Revising and Editing**

**See Ten Rules (and Then Some) to Write By**

When you should engage in serious revising and editing depends on just how involved your paper is at any given moment. As we have stressed, you will be revising and editing throughout the process, and I recommend giving serious attention to the quality of the written pieces at regular intervals, although you can already see that in the text, my students are constantly thinking and reconsidering their ideas in a spiral and iterative, not linear and singular, process. Whenever you need to turn in some subsections, try to finish early (preferably a day or more before) so that you can have both some time away from and fresh eyes (preferably from your institution’s writing center or another person whose writing talents you respect) read your work. Then, you need sufficient time to respond to the comments and to make revisions. If you are handing in your paper periodically and getting reactions from your instructor, you should turn to those comments as soon as you receive them and use them to help you move forward on progress and backward on improvements. The steps spelled out in the recipe will help you to make progress.

Before your final paper is due, you want to be sure to give the work as a whole great attention. There is no substitute for finishing the draft early and having a chance to think about its overall coherence and quality. Again, the recipe provides great guidance and will lead you to a high-quality research paper. What a great feeling you will have when you pass in a paper you are proud of!

**Calendar: Research Design**

**See Designing Your Project Worksheet**

About halfway through the course, you should begin developing your plan for your study. This step is crucially important for determining a workable and sensible project. If your AB provides the foundation for your “building,” the RD is the framing of it. Will your frame be sturdy and straight or are the materials shoddy and poorly put together? In other words, have you chosen appropriate cases? Do you have a strategy for determining the values for your variables? Do you know whether actual data exist to carry out your design or whether you can generate the information that is essential for your study? Have you justified all your decisions? Too many students do not take this phase seriously, and then at the analysis and assessment stage they realize to their horror that they have not put together a workable proposal or that they really have no plan at all. Please do not think that this planning process is simply a make-work project. See how important Hannah’s and Kevin’s sections are for actually conducting their studies? So take the research design seriously, and work through all aspects of it depending on your type of research. Start on this phase immediately after finishing your M&H, about halfway through your project, with the goal of having this section completed at the two-thirds point. That way, you will have the time to adjust your plan if necessary and not be left in the last few days before the paper is due with a completely unworkable and nonsensical study. You will see that when you begin your analysis and assessment of the thesis or hypothesis that you may have to refine some elements of the RD. So again, start as soon as you can, be as precise as possible, and don’t hesitate to modify and rethink as you move forward and have a better understanding of the issues and challenges involved in performing your research. Yes, spiraling continues!

**Calendar: Analysis and Assessment**

**See Raw Data Chart**

Ideally, you should be working on your Analysis and Assessment section as soon as you finish your RD and throughout the second half of the course. For each part of your analysis, remember what your goal is: to determine whether the data are consistent with your thesis (by checking each sub-point) or support your hypothesis. Not confirming your initial contention is fine; what is essential is interpreting your information honestly and accurately. Your faculty member is looking at (a) how well you have followed the research process, (b) your effort at finding information, (c) your ability to evaluate that data, and (d) the way you explain your results. Regarding the calendar, your goal is to finish a first draft of this part with sufficient time left (about a week or two for a term paper, about 6 weeks for a more involved work) to write your conclusion, introduction, and title.

**Calendar: Conclusion, Introduction, Title, and Abstract**

**See Conclusion, Introduction, Title, and Abstract Worksheet**

As the due date for your paper looms near (at least week before you need to turn it in for a semester paper, a bit more than a month for a year-long project), you should seek to write your conclusion, introduction, and ultimately your title, while also drafting an abstract, too. You need to complete them early because even when these sections are done (a week or so later), you still need to revise and edit the paper, and you’ll have an easier time making these improvements if you have had some time away from your text. So follow the advice on this worksheet and write those three interrelated sections which each in its own way seeks to capture the whole of the project. After a first draft of each, seek to write the abstract, using Hannah’s version in the text as a model. Like Hannah, your initial abstract will likely be too long. Still, accomplishing that first statement will be very helpful to you in zeroing in on what is important and it sometimes helps you think of new and “catchy” ways to frame the paper. Use the spiral here to help you with each of these final elements of the paper. Then, when they are complete, then you undertake the revising and editing process of the whole effort for one last time. You should now feel a great rush; you are almost done. Congratulations on reaching your metaphorical 22nd mile and having a completed draft!

**Calendar: Presentation (likely Optional for Most)**

**See Creating Effective Presentations**

The presentation can be such an important part of the learning process. While most students initially dread the idea of sharing their work, this apprehension comes from not understanding that the research process is social. Anyone who has engaged in scholarship knows both how hard doing a good project and how important learning from others are. (Remember wayback in the Annotated Bibliography that you learned that your work was supposed to sit on the shoulders of giants? That’s the learning from others.) Generally, most people want to support your research while also helping you make it better. Please understand that faculty, especially, almost never see a piece as being “done.” They are always going to give you points to consider and things to think about, and this feedback (or even criticism) is valuable in making your final project better. So, think of the presentation as an opportunity for getting advice and learning more. For many students, the occasion of talking about their work and creating corresponding visuals also improves their understanding of the project and its final form. Thus, if you must do the presentation, view it positively and move forward on it as an exercise designed to help you succeed. Also remember: knowing how to present effectively is an important skill in the nonacademic world. Thus, this close-to-the-last task is a great one for preparing you for that (so-called) real world.

**Calendar: Revising and Editing, Reprise!**

**See Ten Rules (and Then Some) to Write By**

As the due date for your paper looms near, you need the time to consider the paper as a whole and to make the project read as a polished, coherent work. The amount of time this process takes depends both on how involved the project is (a term paper? a year-long thesis?) and how much spiraling (rethinking, revising, and editing) you were able to perform along the way. Still, even the most diligent and responsible students need a significant amount of time to do a great job here. Most important are considering your reader’s comments (especially if they are your professor’s), thinking through the issues that have come to mind as you have been spiraling through the process, and addressing any new inconsistencies that pop out at you when you finally read the whole work. You will be surprised at how certain ideas or sections will suddenly appear inappropriate when you see all the sections together or how you will realize that you were missing the point in a particular part or have left some point hanging. Each of these types of weaknesses need attention, and the final phase is when you will polish most effectively. Use the recipe to guide you, and don’t forget also to edit, as the microlevel mistakes and format problems will detract from the work and the impression that you make. The hardest part here is likely maintaining your concentration and commitment, as you are by now tired of this project (though proud of your accomplishment). Just remember: the finish line is in sight, and you want to finish strong, achieving a personal, academic best!