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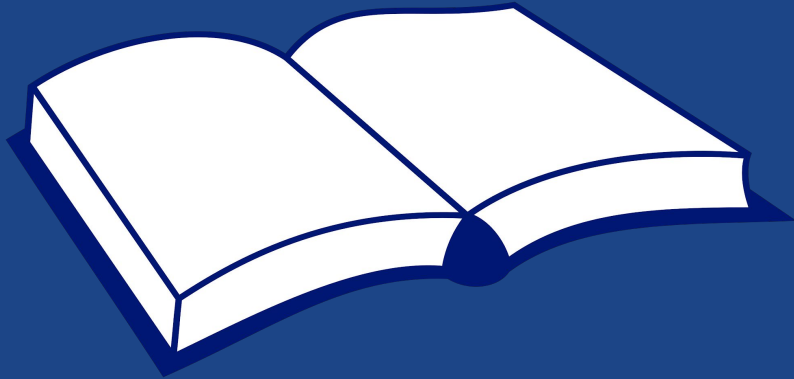
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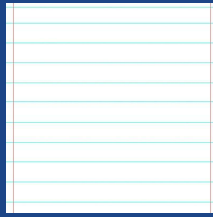
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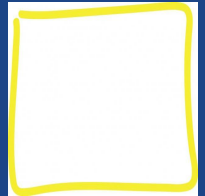
How Can I Face My Fear of the Blank Page?



What is the Blank Page?



The blank page is a google document, a word document, a canvas, a slideshow presentation, etc. that is blank. This may seem self-explanatory. However, a blank page is more than a blank document. Rather, a blank page can be the beginnings of a great idea that will soon enough blossom even when a student is having trouble putting their ideas into complete thoughts.



Helpful Strategies:

**Review Your
Assignment
Instructions**

1

**Create an
Outline**

2

**Organize,
Organize,
Organize!**

3

Keep Writing!

4

Review Your Assignment Instructions



When you are asked to complete an assignment, the first step is to read the assignment instructions as many times as necessary to make sure you understand what is being asked. For example, when one of our writing center specialists, Shayla, took a Conflict Resolution course at Madonna, her final project for the class was to write a research paper. Before she started thinking about how to approach the essay, she made sure she understood the assignment instructions and rubric. After understanding the instructions and rubric, she moved onto the next helpful strategy.

Create an Outline

Outlines are a great way to clearly organize information. Shayla has created outlines for her essays. For example, when she took an Interpersonal Communication at class Madonna, her final project for the course was to write a research essay about listening and empathy. An outline can be created manually by pen/pencil and paper or electronically. Shayla used a blank google document to create her outline. She used a simple outline format such as the one on the next slide:

Create an Outline (cont.)

1.) Introduction

a.) Attention-Getter

b.) Background

Information

c.) Thesis Statement

2.) Body Paragraphs

a.) Body Paragraph 1

i.) Topic Sentence

ii.) Evidence (facts, quotes, examples, statistics)

iii.) Explanation

iv.) Transition sentence for the next paragraph

b.) Body Paragraph 2

i.) Topic Sentence

ii.) Evidence (facts, quotes, examples, statistics)

iii.) Explanation

iv.) Transition sentence for the next paragraph

c.) Body Paragraph 3

i.) Topic Sentence

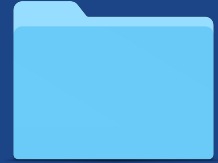
ii.) Evidence (facts, quotes, examples, statistics)

iii.) Explanation

iv.) Transition sentence for the conclusion

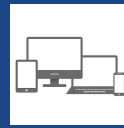
3.) Conclusion

Organize, Organize, Organize!



Once you have your outline, you are now ready to start organizing. Based on the foundations of your outline, organizing your information should be much easier now that you have your structured outline. You should either print out your outline or have the outline on your phone so that you can easily transport the information from your outline to your essay draft.

Keep Writing!



If you are having trouble coming up with more words, you should keep reviewing your outline to see if a new idea sparks. Oftentimes, new information can be revealed to you after reviewing your outline a few times. Additionally, information that you may have forgot to include in your outline can also be added to your essay draft.

Additional Advice

What can help out writer's block and to overcome the fear of the blank page is to free-write. In a free-writing session, you can write what comes to mind without worrying about grammar, punctuation, or even if your writing makes sense. Of course, you do not want to submit your free-writing for your instructor(s) to grade!! However, free-writing, Shayla suggests, is a great way to transport ideas from mind to paper or computer. Just make sure that you do NOT submit your free-writing for your instructors to grade!

Additional Advice (cont.)



The Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro technique can be a helpful study/writing strategy for students.

According to Christina Glon from Emory University's MacMillan Law Library and Francesco Cirillo *Work Smarter, Not Harder website*, the Pomodoro technique has six steps.

Essentially, Glon and Cirillo suggest that students

1) Choose a task that needs to be completed.

2) Set a timer for 25 minutes.

3) Work on the task until the timer rings.

4) After the 25-minute timer rings, the student can put a checkmark where they left off.

5) Take a short break.

6) After every four Pomodoros (25-minute intervals), take a longer break that lasts about 20 to 30 minutes.

Fun Fact:

Did you know that Pomodoro means “tomato” in Italian? The Pomodoro method was developed in the 1980s by an Italian college student who used a tomato-shaped kitchen timer.

Citation: Glon, Christina. “Wellness Resources from MacMillan Law Library.” *Emory | Law Hugh F. MacMillan Law Library*, <https://guides.libraries.emory.edu/c.php?g=1365627&p=10088719>

Additional Advice (cont.)



The Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro technique does not have to be followed exactly like Glon and Cirillo suggests. The Madonna University Writing Center (MUWC) tutors encourages students to alter the Pomodoro technique steps to make it suitable for their studying routines. Be creative!

For example, after 25-minutes of working, you could decide that you want to keep working instead of taking the short 5-minute break. The MUWC tutors advises that the steps to the Pomodoro technique is just a basic outline for how to use the Pomodoro. The Pomodoro technique can be as creative and fun as students would like for it to be!

References

- ❖ Francesco Cirillo. “Francesco Cirillo - FZCO. Productivity, software, and education.” *Francesco Cirillo: Work Smarter, Not Harder*, <https://www.francescocirillo.com/>
- ❖ Glon, Christina. “Wellness Resources from MacMillan Law Library.” *Emory | Law Hugh F. MacMillan Law Library*, <https://guides.libraries.emory.edu/c.php?g=1365627&p=10088719>