Time Management: Research and Active Reading

Learning Support
Writing is not something that just happens. Schedule your time, taking into account life events such as visiting relatives and kids’ soccer games. Remember to leave some leeway for unexpected life events – they’re going to come up.

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<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Receive and analyze assignment</td>
<td>Choose a topic; narrow your focus</td>
<td>Pose questions you might explore</td>
<td>Locate sources</td>
<td>Read and take notes</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Create a working thesis and outline of topic sentences</td>
<td>Draft paper</td>
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<td>Have a friend or Learning Support review your draft</td>
<td>Revise thesis and topic sentences; additional research</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Receive more feedback if needed</td>
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<td>Proofread final draft</td>
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<td>Submit paper</td>
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Remove all distractions.
TV as background noise, a phone (even on vibrate), kids, spouses, pets, noisy neighbors, Facebook, etc…

Prioritize readings and set time limits.
Which are the main readings and which are supplemental? Start with the core – often textbooks – and work your way through the rest as time allows.

Take breaks (but keep them short).
Feed your pet (or kids). Read an online comic (just one). Get some coffee. Set your breaks between articles or between chapters so you have something to look forward to.
USE YOUR TIME STRATEGICALLY

Skim.
Read abstract, introduction, headings, topic sentences, conclusion to create a mental “map” of the reading. Circle anything you are particularly interested in or that may be relevant to an assignment. You can always go back for the rest later.

Don’t try to memorize.
Yes, writing papers is difficult. But not having to memorize for tests is wonderful. Take advantage and read to understand, not memorize details.

Limit research.
Set yourself a time limit and stick to it. If you are not making progress, ask for help.
DEVELOP A SEARCH STRATEGY

#1: Keywords
What are the most important words of your research topic or question?

#2: Synonyms
What are some other ways to express your keywords? (Example: teenagers, youth, and adolescents all mean the same thing)

#3: Linking Words
Use AND to join keywords; OR to join synonyms; NOT to exclude words or phrases

Check out the USC Libraries Research Guides at: http://libguides.usc.edu/SOWKlearningsupport
HOW TO USE “CITED BY”

Google Scholar entries have an important link called “cited by.”

• If an article is cited by many people, it is likely an important work on the topic.
• Click on the works that cited the article to find other articles on the topic you are researching.

310 researchers have cited this article! That is a clue that this is a very important work on the topic.
USE LIMITING OPTIONS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF RESULTS

In QuickSearch, limit by type or date

In databases, limit by type, date, or methodology

In Google Scholar, limit by date

Any time
Since 2013
Since 2012
Since 2009
Custom range...
HOW MANY SOURCES DO I REALLY NEED?

You don’t need to find all of the articles on a topic. You just need to find enough relevant, appropriate, timely articles to adequately represent your topic.

So, when you have enough articles, with balanced viewpoints and strong supporting information…

…stop.
TREAT RESEARCH LIKE ONLINE SHOPPING

Check the boxes for the selections that might work for your topic to put them in your “basket” and keep searching.

You can always take them out later.
WHEN YOU HAVE ENOUGH SOURCES IN YOUR “BASKET,” VIEW THE ABSTRACTS FIRST

Keywords: perspectives; social work practice; views; young children in care

ABSTRACT
Recent reviews of research regarding children in care have concluded that there remains little research which specifically focuses on young children. This paper presents the findings of research carried out with a sample of young children in care (aged 4–7 years) regarding their perspectives of their circumstances. The findings reveal that they have deeply held views regarding living with risk; removal from their families; unresolved feelings of guilt and loss; and not being listened to. This paper considers the implications of these findings for social work practice. It concludes by stressing the capacity of young children in care to express their perspectives, and the importance of practitioners seeking these views and incorporating them into assessment and decision-making processes.

The abstract gives you the results and general argument of the article. If these do not seem relevant to your research, toss it. This will help you narrow down articles.
Once you find a good article, save your research using a research manager, email to yourself, print it, or save to your computer.

You may want to do more than one of the above just to make sure you do not lose your research.
ACTIVE READING AND ANNOTATING ARTICLES

Academic articles follow the same rules as writing as your own papers. Use this to your advantage. Do not read the article from beginning to end.

Instead, use thesis statements, topic sentences, and concluding sentences to glean the main ideas of each article. Pay close attention to the implications of what you’re reading.

that has been undertaken specifically with young children in care to elicit their perspectives. This paper addresses this gap by presenting the findings of research with young children in care (aged 4–7 years) regarding their views on their circumstances and care experiences.

In so doing, this paper argues that while some of the emergent themes may be similar to those identified in research with older children in care, the focus on young children is important given their particular vulnerabilities related to the ongoing concerns that their perspectives have not been (and are still not being) routinely sought by social workers (Laming 2003; Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009). In

Thesis in your own words: Children 4-7 years old in foster care have vulnerabilities and concerns similar to older kids, but also some that are unique, and social workers need to pay attention to their needs.
If the sources have headings, use them to:

- Give you a general idea of organization
- Locate main points
- Locate information relevant to your research
USE TOPIC SENTENCES TO HELP TAKE NOTES

Scan down the article and read ONLY the topic sentence (the first sentence) in each paragraph. These are often the writer’s claims.

The research consisted of 10 case studies involving 39 individual in-depth interviews with young children in care aged 4–7 years, their parents and their social workers with the aim of exploring the participatory potential, opportunities and experiences of this group of children in decision-making processes. The case studies were selected from families previously known to me in my capacity as a Guardian ad Litem (an

Briefly rephrase the main idea of each 1-3 paragraphs in your own words and make notes in the margins.

*Topic Sentence(s): Case studies and interviews are used to evaluate whether kids can participate in decisions about their care situations.*

Together, the thesis and topic sentences will give you a good idea of the main purpose of the article.

Last, read the conclusion (the whole thing) and summarize in 1-2 sentences.
Once you have the ‘skeleton’ of the article, if it still seems relevant to your topic, begin active reading of the supporting text.

In the margins, write:
• Questions
• Definitions of terms
• Responses
• Examples from your own experience
• Analysis
• Highlight or underline anything you find significant or important
ACTIVE READING PRACTICE

Read the excerpt and write out questions, definitions of terms, responses, examples from your own experience, and analysis.

Furthermore, the children in this research, as reflected in a related research with older children in care (Leeson 2007), valued the opportunity to talk. One child, for example, asked to stay a long time and other children were reluctant to end their interview. No child showed adverse affects having been involved in the research interviews. In considering why this was the case, it could be that, within the context of meaningful relationships, the act of creating spaces for young children to speak signaled to them that they were being treated as individuals and that their perspectives were important and valued. It may also be that the process of engaging in a research interview was experienced as cathartic and, in some way, therapeutic (although this was not the intention of the interview). Lastly, it could also be that the research interview occurred at a point where there was a sufficient time lapse from their being removed from home for the children to feel safe enough to reveal negative memories of family life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>What counts as an adverse effect?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Maybe creating new attachments (w/social worker) made a difference in the research outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of terms</td>
<td>Cathartic: psychological relief through the expressing of strong emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples from your own experience</td>
<td>When I was a kid, talking about an experience I was ashamed of didn’t make me feel better. I may need to find other perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>So… talking doesn’t hurt and often helps, but the researchers aren’t sure which of the three possible reasons is accurate – or maybe all three.</td>
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KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

Research: visit the MSW Libguide at:
http://libguides.usc.edu/socialwork

Writing: Learning Support, SOWKlearningsupport@usc.edu or visit the Writing Resources page at:
http://libguides.usc.edu/SOWKlearningsupport

Class Content: Content tutor appointments, Course tutorials, social groups, professors.

Classwork and grades: Professors before/after class, during office hours, by email

Everything else: Academic Advisors