

UCI Writing Center

In this writing lab activity sheet, you can find tools to help structure the beginning stages of developing your capstone paper. **Activity 1** guides you through creating a timeline. **Activity 2** asks you to find some supporting evidence based on keywords that interest you. **Activity 3** structures writing some content for your first draft.

Activity 1 - Creating a Timeline

This chart is aimed to help you create a manageable, realistic timeline for your paper.

In the “deadline” column, determine a deadline for each phase of your paper. Start at the bottom, by listing your project’s due date. Working backwards with however much time you have until it is due, determine appropriate goals by date to accomplish each section of the project. Remember that drafting and revising should be the longest phases of your writing process.

In the “notes” column, write down any guiding thoughts or feedback you’ve already received. If a phase is not applicable to your paper, simply ignore it; these are only our suggestions for one way to structure your process.

Paper Phase	Deadline	Notes
Identifying a Topic of Interest		
Reviewing Sources		
Organizing Notes and Ideas		
Outlining		
Formulating a Main Idea		
Drafting		
Review by a Peer or Instructional Staff		
Revising		
Proofreading		
Submit the Project	Put your paper’s due date here!	

Activity 2 - Source Evaluations

No matter the project you choose, you need to have supporting evidence. Whether you're making a podcast, website, newspaper article, or traditional paper, this activity aims to help you practice finding and identifying usable information. Across different search engines of your choosing, enter at least two keywords that relate to your topic/social issue in parenthesis. You may want to use more specific keywords or filters, such as specifying the date or type of content. Read the introduction and conclusion (in a book, this may mean just the first five pages; in an article, this may mean the first and last page) and select a quote to write down. One example of this process is shown below.

Topic: Gun Violence

Keywords: "guns" "violence" "america"

Search Engine	Title	Author, Publisher, Date	Quote (page #)
Google	What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.	John Gramlich Pew Research Center April 26, 2023	In 2021, the most recent year for which complete data is available, 48,830 people died from gun-related injuries in the U.S., according to the CDC
Google Scholar	Point blank: Guns and violence in America	Gary Kleck Routledge 2017	The gun debate has been unusually statistically oriented, perhaps because intelligent adherents on both sides recognize that most of the key questions are not a matter of <i>whether</i> certain costs and benefits are produced by gun control or gun ownership, but rather a matter of <i>how much</i> cost or benefit there is, and for how many people.
UCI Library	Rhetoric and Guns	Lydia Wilkes, Nate Kreuter, Ryan Skinnell Utah State University Press 2022	From its beginning, gun ownership and use has been inextricably tied to gendered and racialized violence perpetrated primarily by white male European settler-colonists against Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). This foundational gendered, racialized violence enacted through firearms has never ceased. (5)

Topic: _____

Keywords: _____

Search Engine	Title	Author, Publisher, Date	Quote (page #)

Activity 3 - Speed Writing

Before starting this activity, identify the main argument or thesis statement of your paper. It doesn't have to be good, it just has to exist. The following steps pose a series of questions and then ask you to set a 5 minute timer and free write until the time is up. What you write is a good "shitty first draft" that you can use in your paper.

For each number in the list, set a five minute timer and write as much as you can.

1. What do you need to establish before someone else can understand your thesis statement?
2. What are possible counterarguments to your thesis statement?
3. How is your argument supported by research you've done? By content you've learned in class?
4. Why does your thesis statement matter? What are the broader implications?
5. How does your topic and thesis statement relate to worldbuilding? What kind of vision for the future is created?