

What is a Paper Proposal?

A paper proposal is a short paper you write before your major paper to inform your instructor about the topic you would like to write about.

We have to write a paper *before* a paper?

Yes, you do. Think about how much time you will save if you think about what you are going to write, know that the instructor agrees with the direction you are taking, and can start the planning process.

Ok, but how do you write it?

First, look at the assignment sheet given to you by your instructor. What does your paper have to be about? Now, choose your topic.

To start the proposal you'll want to introduce your instructor to your topic and explain why you chose it. You should make it clear how your topic fits the assignment given.

Then, you will include information about how you plan on writing your paper. You can include information about how you plan on organizing it, where you will get the information for it, and any problems you think you may have. You should also explain the rhetorical situation of your paper.

Does this work for *all* papers?

Yes, it does. However, in the second part you may change the type of information provided depending on the type of paper you are writing. For instance:

For a research paper: Include what you hope to learn, who may be helped by the research you are doing, and how you plan on doing the research. Sometimes you may detail an experiment you plan on conducting.

For a literary analysis: Include what type of evidence you plan on providing. Which chapters, scenes, characters etc may be the most helpful?

What else do I need to know?

Paper proposals are still a piece of academic writing. It should be organized, well thought out, and use proper spelling and grammar. Spending time on the proposal now will save you time later and help ensure a better grade on the final paper!