

Strategic Solution: Writing a Paper is Like Painting a House

As anyone who has ever done both jobs knows, writing a term paper and painting a house are similar in many ways. Both are big jobs. Both reflect upon the person doing the job. Both can be done in one of two ways: just *getting the job done* that will look OK at first glance and last about one year OR doing a *quality job* that will pass any inspection and last for a decade. Both benefit from being done in the right order, over time as shown in the lists below.

Painting a House – Just To Get it Done

1. Pick color(s)
2. Buy paint and supplies
3. Paint house
4. Smile for a while
5. Paint again next summer

Painting a House - Quality Job

1. Plan and schedule job
2. Pick a color scheme
3. Measure surface areas
4. Purchase supplies
 - a. Scrapers
 - b. Sandpaper
 - c. Brushes
 - d. Sprayer
 - e. Paint
 - f. Tape
 - g. Drop cloths
 - h. Ladders
 - i. Scaffold
5. Scrape old paint
6. Sand as needed
7. Wash and rinse house
8. Prep
 - a. Mask windows
 - b. Mask doors
 - c. Remove items not painted
 - d. Caulk
9. Apply primer coat/clean up
10. Touch up scraping, sanding and caulking as needed
11. Apply first coat/clean up
12. Apply second coat/clean up
13. Touch up
14. Get spouse's approval
15. Golf next summer!

Writing a Paper – To Get it Done

1. Pick a topic
2. Review Wikipedia entry
3. Write paper night before due date
4. Turn it in (on time)
5. Take a C (you hope) and run!

Writing a Paper – Quality Job

1. Carefully select and define topic as soon as assignment is given
2. Conduct preliminary research about topic on-line (e.g., Wikipedia)
3. Review paper requirements carefully
 - a. Length
 - b. Format
 - c. Due date
 - d. Citation style (MLA or APA)
4. Collect necessary reference materials
 - a. Monographs
 - b. Scholarly articles
 - c. Current web materials
 - d. Interviews
5. Read and identify pertinent items in reference materials
6. Write thesis statement
7. Create a detailed outline
8. Write first draft
9. Share with peer reviewer for feedback
10. Edit and write second draft
11. Take to Writing Center for feedback
12. Edit and write final draft
13. Proofread by reading aloud
14. Double check that paper meets all posted requirements
15. Submit early and get highest grade possible