

Congratulations! You're writing a paper for Elementary Education!

Don't freak out too much! In the end, you will have constructed a piece of writing, available for reference long after you have left Cornell and have a classroom of your own! Please keep in mind that the following is only a list of suggestions, and at the end of these education courses, you will have developed your own personal tricks to writing a great paper.

- **Read the rubric beforehand:** Elementary Ed profs are famous for giving their students four page rubrics for each paper; you don't have to worry about reading every tiny detail, but you should, at the very least, skim the rubric.
- **On Fun and Creativity:** You need to "struggle the struggle" as you hash this out, but at the same time, think about this, not as an assignment, but as a **vital** learning experience.
 - If you can't stand the book you're using for research when writing your Unit, for example, maybe you shouldn't use that book; put it back and look around some more.
 - I once was trying to illustrate what progressive constructivist theorists were saying; this was very high-level stuff and I was having trouble. But, for some reason, what they were saying reminded me of cartoons...so I included photos of these cartoons in my final piece (with explanations of why, of course).
 - **There are other ways to do this;** if you hate writing papers, why not visually illustrate what you're saying instead, with little 2-3 paragraph explanations of your creations? Ask your professor for more guidance; I bet there are other people in your class who would also like to frame this paper in a way that is "different" while still holding with the assignment requirements.
- **Use the tone you are most comfortable with:** Generally, it is okay to be conversational and semi-formal in your piece, especially since you should be connecting the texts to your experience in the public schools. As long as you are explicitly connecting with the paper's assignment, the tone does not have to take precedence in terms of importance.
- **Citations?** Generally, professors don't care how you cite as long as you do it. I used MLA unless otherwise stated; sometimes, if I was being extremely casual with a piece of writing, like with daily journals that we had to turn in, I would simply write the title, author and year at the bottom of the document.
- **You're going to be looking at this paper again:** Each paper I wrote was done with the idea that I would be going back to it when I was actually teaching. These assignments are designed to both help you think like a teacher, as well as center your thinking when you actually are a teacher. Don't dismiss any assignment on the basis that it will not be important in the upcoming years, because it will.
- **Mistakes are the best way to learn:** Profs encourage you to make mistakes. Learning is not clean or organized; learning is messy. Your papers will follow this model, too. Not only should you accept making errors, but learn to embrace them and learn from them as well. If you tank a paper, think about why; never be afraid to revise.
- **What's the best way for YOU to write this paper?:** Everyone in your class will be doing these tasks differently; it is up to you to figure out the best way to research and write this paper. I liked to spend the bulk of the time researching and drafting little bits and pieces; then I would write the whole thing over a series of six or seven hours, but I

had a friend who would write her paper early and spend the bulk of the time revising it.
What way will you come up with?

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