Writing Tips

• Schedule a self-imposed timeline
  o Look for natural ‘cut points’ in the rubric and work backwards from the due date to establish points when you should accomplish portions of the paper.
  o Write each deadline in your planner, e.g. “May 18: all articles read/highlighted”
  o The more the paper is worth = the more time dedicated to the paper
  o Aim for finishing the paper 4-5 days in advance

• Read critically and broadly
  o Understand you will likely read more articles than you may use. Skim articles and review abstracts to identify what will be most useful.
  o Highlight text that jumps out of you, even if you’re unsure of the reason why.
  o Identify strengths of the evidence in each article
  o Take notes as you read of ideas, questions, and overlapping material between articles.

• Just begin writing!
  o You do not have to follow the order of the rubric. If the introduction doesn’t come easily but the descriptions of the study do, start there.
  o Consider using an outline or mapping your thoughts so you have an overview and can work on sections as they become clearer to you.
  o By beginning early, you can anticipate problems you may encounter and can ask for help.

• Seek support and use resources
  o Clarify with your instructor
  o Use your peers! Exchange papers and point out places where things aren’t clear or seem awkward.
  o Use your resources through the LibGuides, APA Style Manual, a thesaurus for repetitive words, Purdue’s OWL, and the APA Style Blog online.
  o Email your Reading and Writing Specialists ASAP. We can help you at any point in the process through email, phone, or a one-on-one meeting.

• Review
  o Don’t lose easy points by forgetting spelling and grammar checks through Word.
  o Read the paper aloud. You are more likely to hear (rather than see) areas that need clarification.
  o By finishing early, you’ll have time to put the paper aside and come back to it with fresh eyes.

By following these tips, you put yourself at an advantage long-term. Aim to improve your skills through pre-planning and continued to support rather than looking for a ‘quick fix’ in the short-term. Your paper’s quality will advance and you will be more able to produce assignments independently.