1. **Know your topic.**
Do substantial background reading on your topic so that you can knowledgably choose a thesis statement.

2. **Create your thesis statement.**
The thesis statement is a sentence or two that concisely states the focus of the paper and introduces supporting material. A good thesis is not a general statement but a specific assertion that is backed up by arguments.

3. **Construct an outline to organize your ideas.**
Creating an outline is especially helpful for lengthy papers. An effective outline clearly shows how your supporting arguments uphold your thesis. Think of it as a map of your paper. Include an Introduction, Body and Conclusion.

4. **Know your audience.**
The tone of the paper must be appropriate for your intended audience. For a general audience, do not assume that your readers are acquainted with the topic. Define and explain terms, phrases and acronyms that might be unfamiliar to them.

5. **Keep research notes and early drafts until paper is complete.**
Do not discard research and notes you think might not be useful. During the writing process your knowledge of the topic will develop and the previously overlooked notes might prove valuable. As well, it is easier to refer to notes than it is to find a source again.

6. **Don’t just list quotations - interpret them.**
Using quotations as the basis for a paper is a common mistake. Doing so results in a paper that lacks substance. Integrate quotations and paraphrases into the text by linking concepts, elaborating ideas and making comparisons.

7. **Demonstrate critical thinking.**
Critical thinking relies on reason, not emotion. It examines facts without bias, and makes rational conclusions based on verifiable evidence. To use critical thinking in essay writing, study multiple, reliable sources, analyze the material, then develop original, logical arguments supporting your thesis.

8. **Edit to keep writing clear and concise.**
In academic writing, less is often more. Use the fewest number of words to express a thought. Employ concrete nouns and active verbs. Write freely for your original draft; leave it for a couple days, then edit to remove unessential words and unclear or repetitive sentences. Reading aloud can assist the editing process.