Your Ultimate Guide to Last Minute Essays

Step 1. Self-Control App. Download it now.
If you don’t know what this is, google it and download it as fast as you possibly can. Trust me. Because no matter how many times you promise yourself you won’t get on Facebook, let’s be honest: that website is irresistible when you are trying to write an essay. Heck, have a field day. Block StumbleUpon, Twitter, and whatever other sites you might be into these days, and block them until your essay is submitted. Just get off the internet. You’d be amazed how productive you can be.

Step 2. Take a deep breath.
You can’t do anything if you can’t breathe, and I bet you won’t be writing much if all you can think about is how stressed you are. Just take five minutes (I promise five minutes won’t destroy your chance at finishing) and refocus. Eat a snack, play your favorite song, sing into a hairbrush, dance around, it doesn’t really matter. Let your brain, and your body, relax. You are no good to yourself paralyzed by anxiety.

Step 3. Ready, begin!
Start by outlining your argument. And if you don’t outline, that’s okay, because it doesn’t need to be a full or detailed list of what you’re going to say and when you’re going to say it. If that’s not normally a part of your process, don’t do it. Instead, spend as much time as you need to explore the topic so that you won’t get to the third page and realize you were wrong or didn’t prove your thesis. That’s the other thing; state your thesis. Underline it, circle it, and highlight it. Make sure you understand exactly what you are arguing, because forgetting your thesis is the best way to waste time. It doesn’t matter what your essay is: yes, you do need a thesis statement. Figure out exactly what you want it to be, and then make sure you can support it. Find a couple quotes now, and make a note of where they came from.

Step 4. Write like the wind.
You don’t have a lot of time, so make it count. Keep your outlined notes in front of you, and type out your ideas as they come. Do not, I repeat, do not get stuck on word choice or spelling mistakes. Get your ideas out, and, no matter how ugly they might look, wait and copy-edit at the end. Working through grammatical errors will only distract you from what’s really important, which is proving your thesis. Keep checking in at the beginning of each paragraph: how does this relate to my thesis? Moreover, don’t let yourself get bogged down with organization. If you are having trouble with structure, go back to the basics:
I. Topic sentence: How does this relate to my thesis?
II. Evidence: Why should the reader believe me?
   a. Lead into the quote
   b. Quote (and cite the source)
   c. Analyze the quote
III. What has this paragraph added to the essay?
   a. But don’t you dare just repeat your topic sentence!

Step 5. Edit.
Check your argument to make sure you stuck with the prompt and your thesis. Double-check your evidence to see that you supported your point. See if your organization makes sense, and that you included some transition sentences between paragraphs so it flows. Now, copy-edit. Check for repetitious word choice, tense shifts, grammar, and spell-check. If you can delete any words from a sentence, do it. Repeat, as many times as you can, until you submit your essay.

Step 6. Sleep. Job well done, so take a well-deserved nap.