

Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip

Teaching with Writing



Planning to Teach with Writing

Rationale: As you plan your fall teaching, consider the ways that student writing can help students meet your course objectives.

Include a syllabus statement about the importance of writing in your discipline:

Because students may question the relevance of writing and writing instruction in some disciplines, include a statement on your syllabus addressing the functions of writing in your discipline and the course. Find opportunities for your students to talk and write about the role of writing in your discipline. See examples from [Biological Sciences](#) and [Political Science](#).

Plan to offer informal writing opportunities that allow students to use writing as a tool for thinking and deeper understandings of key course concepts (these can be skimmed for comprehension and counted as either credit/no credit, or graded quickly via a $\sqrt{-}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{+}$ system):

In-class two-minute writes:

Use informal, two-minute writes before, in the midst of, or after a lecture or presentation. Students record their presuppositions or prior knowledge, ask questions for clarification, or summarize the key concept/issue/debate.

Reading Responses or journals:

Ask students to summarize and respond to course readings. Students can use their responses to initiate small or large-group discussion topics. See more at [Informal, In-class Writing Activities](#).

For more formal writing assignments, plan writing process steps that break complex tasks into more manageable steps, and that give students a chance to receive quick, formative feedback before the graded final product:

Scaffold Large, Formal Writing Assignments

Break big writing tasks into manageable chunks of work with preliminary deadlines and opportunities for feedback. For a research assignment involving secondary sources, students can first submit a research question or brief proposal, along with a preliminary annotated bibliography. These can be quickly reviewed so that students can revise their focus and sources early in the process. Next, students can submit a preliminary draft to receive peer response; then they revise and edit to submit for a grade. See more at [Sequencing Assignments Over the Course of the Semester](#).

Point Students to Student Writing Support

In your syllabus, include [one or more of these links to Student Writing Support](#), to encourage your students to meet with a writing consultant for feedback on a formal assignment draft.

Comment: Students produce more effective and engaged writing when they understand why they are being asked to write in a given course, when they have opportunities to think with low-stakes writing, when complex texts are broken into stages, and when they are invited to revise more formal writing in light of feedback.

Learn more:

- Bean, John C. (2008). *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

- [Examples of Writing to Learn Activities](#) (WAC Clearinghouse)

- [Designing Effective Writing Assignments](#). (Teaching with Writing)

- [Teaching with Writing: Course Design](#) (Teaching with Writing)

- * [Ask Students for Mid-Semester Feedback](#) (Teaching with Writing Tip)

Questions? Visit us online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/index.html>

See attachment for a PDF version of this tip.

Further support: Contact a member of the WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) team for a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation:

<http://z.umn.edu/twwconsultation>

Our purpose is to provide practical strategies for teaching with writing. Our goal: to offer timely and pragmatic support to faculty members and instructors who teach with writing in undergraduate and graduate courses in all disciplinary areas.