



Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip
Explain the relevance of writing assignments
in your syllabus

Rationale: Students are more likely to devote time to course-related writing if they can understand how writing functions in the discipline generally and in the course specifically.

Give students some context for the writing they will be doing in your course by including a syllabus statement. For example:

On writing in Biological Sciences

Writing is more important in the biological sciences than many people might expect. Scientists write to convey the methods and results of their research to their colleagues and to record their day-to-day work in the laboratory or in the field. They also write grant proposals to win funding for their research, and reviews of each other's work. Writing in biology is an integral part of scientific discovery and analysis, and thus must be clear, concise, and logical. Even when they write only for themselves, biologists must convey information accurately and precisely—often in limited space. In this course, students will document their work in lab notebooks and reports, and they will review each other's work as scientific colleagues.

and

On writing in Music

Writing about music often requires the writer to translate ideas about what is heard (sound) into an entirely different medium (prose). This translation process integrates two different systems of notation (musical notes and written language) in order to communicate about ideas that exist in sound and time. Writers in the field of music also respond to musical works, analyze compositions and techniques, profile work of specific composers, write grants for support of their work, review others' compositions and productions, and promote musical events. The scholarly study of music depends upon written reasoning to examine historical and cultural contexts of music. Many musicians, composers, and professors of music report spending as much time writing as composing or performing. In this course, students will analyze the elements of musical form, and reflect on the objectives and practices of musical expression.

Reinforce the syllabus statement by regularly showing and discussing discipline-relevant writing with students. Consider showing and discussing your own writing process. When you assign a paper, show an early and late draft of a page of one from your articles. If the earlier draft includes comments from a reviewer, all the better. Or, when you ask students to write informally or reflectively in class, write a long with them. Students benefit from

seeing professors in the disciplines as writers, and from hearing about the functions and the challenges of writing in various disciplines.

Resources:

- See sample syllabus statements for various disciplines in our [Discipline-Specific Resources](#); further ways a syllabus can highlight the importance and role of writing in a course are at the [Checklist for Writing-Intensive Syllabi](#).
- The Center for Writing's Student Writing Support (SWS) offers free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students—graduate and undergraduate—at all stages of the writing process. You can [include a statement about using Student Writing Support in your syllabus](#).
- In addition, SWS offers a number of [web-based resources](#) on topics such as avoiding plagiarism, documenting sources, and planning and completing writing projects

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

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.