



**Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip
Summer Tip #2:
Writing activities and technology**

This is the second in a three-part series of summer tips that will invite you to think about when, where, and how writing appears in your courses, either in new ways or more effectively in familiar ones. While usually tips emphasize practical advice about ways to incorporate writing instruction into diverse course offerings, these three tips will emphasize writing activities, assignments, and instruction in course preparation and design. The series will include activities for reflecting on the role of writing and writing instruction in your courses, recommendations for planning graded and ungraded writing on a variety of platforms, and material related to writing instruction and assistance that might be usefully included in course syllabi.

- Summer Tip #1: Writing and course design
- Summer Tip #2: Writing activities and technologies
- Summer Tip #3: Ways to discuss writing in your syllabus

Most of us use writing technologies that are comfortable and familiar, whether pen and paper or word processing programs like Microsoft Word or Google Docs. At the same time, new platforms and technologies can help you and your students think differently about writing or even mitigate some sources of difficulty and error. The list below is not comprehensive, but includes some of the most popular technologies for common writing issues and processes. Most are free or low cost, and several are directly supported by the [University Of Minnesota Office Of Information Technology](#).

Technologies for brainstorming and concept mapping

Pedagogical research in a variety of fields has demonstrated the value of [concept mapping](#) as a tool for learning. A variety of tools are available for getting ideas “on paper” and thinking about project design, allowing writers to create, connect, and manipulate their early ideas.

[Visual Understanding Environment](#) (VUE) is a mind mapping tool created explicitly for teaching and learning. This web based tool moves easily from creation to presentation and supports a wide variety of integration possibilities for creating dynamic content. VUE also provides galleries of users materials and forums for instructors on its use.

A number of other brainstorming and mind mapping applications are available for specific devices and purposes. Some of the best are rated [here](#).

Technologies for editing

In addition to helping students learn advanced options for their word processing editors (grammar and spellcheck), a number of stand-alone products are available to help students catch common errors in their writing.

[Grammarly](#) is a free program that can be integrated with the google platform and Microsoft Word. It is effective in noting common errors and the premium edition also makes stylistic suggestions and generates reports on student’s most common errors.

[Hemmingway](#) is an app designed to eliminate complexity in prose style. Borrowing its style from its namesake author, Hemmingway highlights complex word choice or sentence construction

and emphasizes simpler options. While not all audiences prefer a plain style, Hemingway will call attention to passive voice construction, adverbs and adjectives, and other stylistic flourishes.

[Phraseology](#) is an iPad exclusive app that combines text editing and word processing with automated linguistic analysis tools. It provides options for distraction free writing and a host of readability rating indexes for considering the reading ease of your finished texts.

Technologies for documentation

Some of the most exciting applications for academic writing are newly available and free documentation and aggregation platforms.

[Zotero](#) is a browser integrated application for collecting, storing, and documenting your reference materials. Users can establish citation libraries and save pdf versions of documents in shareable folders, making collaboration exceptionally easy.

If your students already have a number of pdf. documents from course readings or moodle sites, you may want to recommend [Mendeley](#). Mendeley integrates many of the features of other reference managers but also includes simple pdf. annotation.

The University of Minnesota Libraries supports a number of [citation managers](#) and offers classes to help bring writers up to speed with these technologies.

Finally, schedule a meeting with a WAC/WID Teaching Consultant: The people who write these tips are here this summer to talk about writing in your courses and curricula. A brief meeting now or a request for consultation can be a good first step to finding resources and thinking about your classroom practices. In addition, the shared interests and concerns of faculty are the basis for planning our series of Teaching with Writing during the academic year. Consultations are available by clicking the link below.

If you aren't yet ready for a teaching consultation, take a minute to browse the teaching resources at our [Teaching Resources page](#). It offers advice and resources on all aspects of assigning, assessing, and responding to writing. In addition, if you identify a topic that hasn't been discussed or needs clarification, you may inspire the next Teaching with Writing Tip.

Further support: Visit us online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww>. To schedule a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation, [click here](#).

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