



Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip Starting the Semester with Writing

The new semester is here, and it's a great time to introduce writing in your classes. Early writing assignments can help to determine prior knowledge, familiarize your students with course goals, and help you to recognize students' abilities and challenges. Similarly, preparing students early for writing assignments encourages better drafting and revision, circumventing the tendency to write in one sitting. Here are five tips to assist you in preparing for a semester that includes discipline--specific writing opportunities that benefit students and won't overwhelm instructors.

Update your syllabus: Last month, our TWW tip included details about [material you can include in your syllabus](#). Regardless of whether your course carries a writing intensive designation, including specific course goals about writing in your discipline promotes student learning. Formal writing assignments and opportunities for revision allow you to address higher order thinking skills of analysis and evaluation. [Informal writing activities](#) can spur effective discussion, ensure that students arrive to class prepared, and reinforce concepts and connections to course content. Small writing activities can be an effective way to take attendance, assess student preparation and participation, and build a dialogue with students in a low-stakes environment. As you update your syllabus, consider a variety of ways writing might promote learning, whether in an introductory course or an advanced one.

Review your department's writing guidelines: More than 50 programs, departments and colleges are now a part of the [Writing Enriched Curriculum Program](#). The WEC program aids faculty in determining discipline-relevant writing abilities and expectations for students in undergraduate majors. If your course is a part of a major curriculum addressed by a faculty-authored WEC writing plan, the writing abilities and criteria lists found in these plans can help you to determine evaluative criteria for your assignments.

The criteria segment of a [WEC writing plan](#) (Section 4) provides a faculty-generated menu of specific features of effective writing in majors.. While no individual course will likely address all listed criteria, many courses will target some, and using the criteria from your writing plan can afford clarity and consistency across courses. Even if you are not a part of a WEC unit, these plans can still help you to see how faculty in related disciplines define successful writing in their fields.

Consult the TWW Resources page: If you'd like quick assistance on [assignment design](#), [responding and grading](#) student writing, helping students to [incorporate sources](#) in their writing, or strategies for assisting students in identifying and addressing [sentence--level errors](#) in their own writing, visit the TWW resources page, where you'll find materials from our program and links to resources from writing programs at other leading research universities.

Schedule a TWW consultation: The TWW program offers consultations on assignment design, writing instruction, and assessment, either in person or online. You can schedule a face-to-face consultation on all three Twin Cities campuses or arrange to share materials online. Schedule your consultation [here](#).

Attend our Teaching With Writing Series: As many of you know, our WAC program also hosts the popular Teaching with Writing event series. This semester, we have workshops,

faculty panels, and conversations with readings on topics ranging from teaching writing one-to-one to working with multilingual writers. Preregistration is required, and events fill quickly. We hope you will visit our [events page](#) to learn about our programs and register for this semester's offerings and [ULearn](#) to reserve your seat.

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.