

How to be Successful in COCC Writing Classes

A Guide for ELL Students



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The Writing Center

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WHILE ATTENDING THE CLASS

 Recognize that you have a diverse and rich background that enables you to bring so much more to your writing class.¹ COCC is thrilled to have you here!

 Become familiar and use the spelling and grammar functions of word processing programs.

 Seek out material in your native language. Several studies² show that your accessing materials in your first language can be beneficial for you as you are working in English.³

 Advocate for yourself so you can get the help that you need. Self-advocacy can be defined as: knowing yourself, knowing what you need and want, and knowing how to get what you need and want.⁴

 Take notes. this will help you improve your language skills by increasing your English vocabulary, improving your comprehension skills, and allowing you to maintain focus on what your professor wants you to learn.



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[1] <https://old.ed.psu.edu/pds/elementary/intern-resources/esl-handbook/politics-of-language>

[2] <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/home-language-english-language-learners-most-valuable-resource>

[3] <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1179&context=teachlearnfacpub>

[4] <http://accessproject.colostate.edu/sa/>

BEFORE YOU BEGIN WRITING



 If you are having trouble deciding on a topic, you can do a few things:

*Use the course materials to give you ideas about what your topic could be. Review lecture notes and reread course readings to find ideas that are interesting to you.

*Talk about your ideas with classmates, friends, your instructor, or the people at The Writing Center. Oftentimes having a conversation will help you think about your topic in new ways.

*Try a simple brainstorming exercise, using freewriting, lists, or a mind map.

 If you are worried that you won't sound smart enough, first of all, dispute that negative voice in your head. You can do this!

*Remind yourself of the past successes that you have already had. Think about a time when you felt good about something that you wrote, whether it was in your native language or in English.

*Put this experience into perspective. This is just ONE assignment of ONE class. Your life will not be defined by this. Take a moment to look around you in class. Writing papers is a normal part of being in college. Thousands of students are doing exactly what you are doing right now and many are feeling what you are feeling.

*Take action. Do something that will help you move from feeling what you are feeling. Try a free writing exercise where you set a timer for five minutes and just write whatever comes to your mind. The more writing you do, the more comfortable and confident you will feel about it.

[5] <https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/general/writers-block/>

Many writing students experience difficulties before they begin to write. If you are in one of these situations, here is some helpful advice ⁵:

 If you are having trouble understanding the assignment, ask your instructor questions about anything that you find confusing.

The Writing Center is a good resource to help you understand specific vocabulary that may seem similar (what's the difference between analyze, discuss, argue, compare?).

 If you are having trouble knowing what to write about, consider doing more research. The librarians at Barber Library are a great resource. They can work with you on finding more sources for your assignment. If you have already done some research but you are still stuck, go back through your sources and jot down notes on the sides, highlight anything that stands out to you, and take notes on your own ideas.



*Give yourself plenty of time to seek out the resources that can help you with your assignment. Having a plan will help you avoid procrastinating and give you confidence.

*Don't forget to schedule time for the editing and revising process. Once you have your draft, then you can work on refining your paper, so you are more confident in what you have written.



A FEW MORE THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ONCE YOU BEGIN⁶

 Start writing early, even before you think you are ready to write. Writing early helps you explore your topic and discover concepts and areas that you may not have thought of.

 Don't write the essay from beginning (introduction) to the end (conclusion). Instead, write the section that seems ready to be written, even if you aren't sure where, how, or if it will fit in.

 Always keep your essay's purpose and organization in mind. Using an outline will help with this. And it's okay if your outline changes or evolves as you are writing.

 When revising, don't focus so much on editing sentence by sentence, but think about rearranging the order of the larger parts and adding or deleting sections in order to best support the purpose of the essay. Once you have it revised in this way, then work on sentence, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary revision.

Grammar Apps & Programs

We live in a time where there are so many phone apps and computer programs that can help us in our journey to learn and write in another language.

 Grammarly is one of the most well-known grammar checking programs and it can help you be a more independent writer. The free version of Grammarly checks for spelling, clarity, and grammar.



 Google Translate can be a very efficient tool that can help you with language translation. However, Google Translate should mostly be used for individual words or very short phrases, and then always proofread the translation. Google Translate doesn't take into account the context in which you are writing, so often the translation of longer and more complex sentences isn't correct. Use this tool sparingly and always reread what is translated.

[6] <https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/>