

## **TO THE FACULTY**

This handbook is a revision of the one originally written in 2005 and accomplished with the support of ECC's Assessment Committee. Initially, my main goal was to provide a brief and concrete resource for students so that they could write more effectively in all their classes. That goal has not changed as this handbook includes much information from the first version: general information about writing at ECC, the writing process, the evaluation of writing, common writing problems, writing in the disciplines (though the actual student essays are new), the research paper, taking essay exams, and sources for writing assistance. It also includes new sections on plagiarism, rubrics, the Minimum Competencies policy, and editing strategies. Beginning in fall 2010, this guide will now be given to all incoming College 101 students; it will also be available as a link (through D2L) for all students enrolled in online classes as well as the library homepage. I hope you find its contents helpful since we all have a stake in improving our students' writing!

M.N.

## **TO THE STUDENTS**

This handbook was written for you. As a student at ECC, you will be expected to write in the majority of your classes. Many college students are surprised to learn that writing does not only take place within English courses but also courses in math, psychology, art, humanities, history, biology, physics, computer science, etc. As you approach different assignments, I encourage you to use this handbook as a resource tool. Of course, the importance of writing in a college curriculum is no surprise to the faculty who agree that effective writing is central to a well-educated individual. Certainly this handbook is not a substitute for taking your composition sequence (English 101 and 102) as early in your education as possible. Instead, it is designed to assist you as you discover that writing is an integral part of every facet of your education. I have furnished you with some guidelines to help you understand the writing you will be asked to complete at ECC as well as a list of resources available on and off campus that can be used to help you improve your writing. I hope you find this handbook valuable as you begin or continue your education at ECC. To improve your writing is to improve your ability to think and, therefore, become a more effective human being, a more conscientious citizen, and a successful professional.

M.N.

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## **SECTION I: WRITING AT ECC**

### **WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

Writing is an important feature of many of the courses you will take at ECC. Faculty who assign writing in their courses do so because they recognize that it offers different insights into their students' thinking and understanding beyond just tests.

ECC's faculty support the value of writing across the curriculum and believe that writing is not only essential in courses within the English Department but also a crucial element of students' learning in a variety of other courses as well. Though the formal teaching of writing remains the charge of the English Department, most faculty agree that students should consistently practice their writing, even after they have finished their English composition sequence. Writing effectively is not simply a course requirement; for the faculty, how effective something is written is a sign of a well-educated person and an essential component of a college education.

### **MINIMUM COMPETENCY POLICY**

In 2006, ECC instituted this policy. Essentially, it is a way to ensure that students are sufficiently prepared for the general education courses in which they are enrolled. In other words, a student who needs to take a developmental writing class (English 098, for example) should not be taking a course in which he or she is asked to write a research paper; the student may not be fully prepared for that kind of intensive writing assignment, and so the college now requires that the student fulfill any deficiencies before taking courses that require those skills. Reading is a minimum competency for virtually all general education courses, but it is possible to construct a full course load while addressing these gaps. Below is the actual policy as it is written in the college catalog; you will notice that much of it hinges on placement:

#### **Reading**

The prerequisite for all IAI general education classes is a grade of "C" or better in RDG 091, an ACT reading score of 18 or above, or an appropriate placement score.

#### **Writing**

The prerequisite for IAI general education courses with a writing competency is a grade of "C" or better in ENG 098, an ACT English score of 20 or better, or an appropriate placement score.

#### **Mathematics**

The prerequisite for IAI general education courses with a quantitative literacy competency is a "C" or better in an appropriate math course, an ACT math score of 23, or an appropriate placement score.

## WRITING INSTRUCTION

Writing instruction at the college level obviously occurs in English classes, but it also takes place in other courses where writing is a component. This is because, in the last 20 years or so, there has been significant research that connects writing to learning and critical thinking. In the past, faculty may have recognized and assessed only a student's final written product; today, however, faculty across disciplines frequently help their students in the various stages of the writing process. That is not to say that faculty do not value the final product or essay; of course they do. But they also acknowledge that writing is a process and that many things must transpire to contribute to the polished essay. Because of this recognition, ECC faculty often assist their students in planning, drafting, and revising their essays. Some instructors incorporate these elements directly into their courses while others may not. Regardless, you must understand that virtually all instructors *expect* you to follow the writing process whether it is a formal part of the class or not. For those times when you would like some additional feedback on your writing beyond your instructor's, learn to take advantage of the many resources available through The Write Place, ECC's on-campus writing center. At The Write Place, you will find a valuable supplement to classroom instruction and individualized attention to all your writing needs. Note that the main purpose of this writing center is not to edit your essays but rather to give you more substantive assistance on areas like topic selection, thesis development, organization, and documentation. For more on The Write Place, see pages 59-60.

As you either start or continue your college education, it is critical to collaborate with other students as well as faculty as you seek to improve your writing; with their feedback, you will often be well on your way to significant revision of your work, which is an expectation at the college level. This suggestion often runs counter to the understanding that many students have—that writing is a solitary endeavor. Most faculty recognize the benefits of collaboration, both inside and outside the classroom. Of course, the writing you do will be *your* writing, but there is nothing wrong with getting suggestions and feedback from others. The sooner you recognize this, the sooner you will see significant improvement in your writing. A side benefit is that this process fosters the importance of working with others, a skill clearly important in the “real world” as well.

Writing courses at ECC often utilize collaborative teaching strategies, and you should take full advantage of them. As mentioned above, the formal teaching of writing is the responsibility of the English Department. Since writing is a central part of the curriculum, and because you will be writing in almost all your classes, you would be well-advised to take your English composition sequence (English 101 and 102) during your first year—assuming, of course, that you are eligible for English 101. Note that if you are placed in a below-100 level English course, you must complete that class (or classes) successfully in order to take any other courses for which writing is a competency; this was referred to earlier as ECC's Minimum Competency Policy. Most students are surprised to learn how crucial English 101 and 102 are to their success in other courses. Those students who procrastinate and take their English courses right

before they leave ECC recognize how valuable taking those courses earlier would have been. For more specific information about placement in English courses and course descriptions, please consult the most recent college catalog or the college website (elgin.edu). Beyond English 102, students interested in further developing their writing have a number of courses from which to choose: ENG 109 *Expository Writing*, ENG 110 *Creative Writing*, and a number of genre-based courses that are offered as demand dictates, including ENG 210 *Fiction Writing*, ENG 211 *Playwriting*, ENG 212 *Poetry Writing*, and ENG 213 *Literary Non-Fiction*. Several journalism courses are available as well, including JRN 130 *Introduction to Mass Communications*, JRN 131 *Fundamentals of Journalism*, and JRN 134 *Newspaper Workshop*.

## **WRITING AS A PROCESS**

You will probably do your most effective writing if you think of any writing assignment as a process that includes a continuous cycle of prewriting, writing, revising, and editing. This process is often messy, time-consuming, and frustrating; in fact, most professional writers would agree with that description. But it also can be incredibly rewarding and stimulating when you have written something of which you can be proud (and which also receives a good grade). When you do not allow enough time for this process, you will not experience that feeling of pride and accomplishment. Essentially, then, this means you should not procrastinate. Though faculty do not expect you to run home and start a lengthy essay the day it is assigned (though I'm sure they would be delighted if you did!), they also assume that you have done more than written a first draft. This runs counter to the approach many students used in high school. When you wait too long to start, what you turn in as a "final" draft is, in your instructor's eyes, really a first draft, and the grade usually reflects that. So give yourself enough time for the process to work. Though for some of you this will require a shift in the way that you approach writing assignments, it will be well worth it. The following explanation of the writing process is a useful model to follow, regardless of the specific writing task you have been assigned.

### **Prewriting**

Sometimes you will be assigned a specific topic, and sometimes it will be up to you to determine one on your own. Even at this early stage, you need to be sure you choose a topic which you can develop within the assignment guidelines. Tackling a subject such as violence, for example, is not easily managed in five or six pages, but a topic such as the effect of violence in cartoons on a designated group (like children) would be more manageable. Regardless of the actual topic, the strategies below will help you generate material from which to begin your essay. A general rule of thumb here is that it is better to work from a wealth of information than not enough. The more "stuff" you generate, the better. Of course, not all of it will find its way into your essay (nor should it!), but that's just fine. Remember, effective writing can be a messy process, and you will produce much that ultimately gets discarded. But, you will also generate a great deal of valuable information that will eventually find its way into your essay.

When approaching an assignment, there are some tried and true strategies that can help you generate ideas. Don't be fooled into thinking that this is an optional step. More often than not, students who run into difficulties with particular writing assignments have not devoted enough time to this earliest stage of the process; this happens even with subjects you think you know fairly well. Don't let that happen to you. Some of these strategies might be familiar to you while others are new; learn to rely on a variety of them to generate as much detail and information as possible.

1. Freewriting. The creative side of writing is often in conflict with the logical side; in other words, students are often more concerned about mechanics or structure than they are about the ideas themselves. To combat this, set aside about 15-20 minutes and write freely. This means you do not stop. At all. The point here is to get in the habit of constant writing. Some students prefer to do this on paper while others prefer freewriting on the computer so that they can produce more material in the same amount of time. In either case, one of the main goals of freewriting is not only to *record* your thoughts (i.e., "I'm thinking about x, so I will write it down") but to *create* thought as well. It's almost as if the physical act of writing causes you to have ideas that you might not otherwise have, even if you thought for a long time. This is the magic of freewriting. Once your time is up, you can go back and read what you have written to see what is worth keeping. Of course, not all of it will be. Remember not to be too critical of yourself here; misspelled words and fragments are not a problem at this stage. The point is to get something down. After you read over what you have produced, pull out a key idea or phrase, write it at the top of another page, and do it all over again. Each time you do this, your focus becomes narrower.
2. Dialogue. Writer's block often occurs from the physical act of writing, of actually putting words on a page. If this is the case for you, find someone willing to listen and talk about your topic. This initial feedback can be an important step as you discover what you think about your topic and possible means of developing it. Remember to take notes right after you talk so that you have a record to assist you later.
3. Brainstorming. This is basically free association on paper. In contrast to freewriting, which looks more like "real" writing with sentences and perhaps even paragraphs, brainstorming appears more like a list. As with freewriting, though, not everything on this list will be relevant, so be sure to drop those ideas that are unrelated to your topic. Again, you may want to do this more than once, becoming narrower with your focus each time.
4. Questions. Technically, this is called *heuristics*, and the term refers to standard rhetorical procedures for discovery. They include questions (such as who, what, why, when, where, and how) that you can use to generate ideas or arrange thoughts. Of course, not all questions will be relevant for all writing assignments, so choose the most logical ones and jot down your responses.

5. Clustering. This is a method of “mapping” your ideas as they come into your mind. It is similar to brainstorming, though it is much more visual. To cluster, put a word, phrase, or sentence in a circle in the center of a blank page. Then, put every new idea that comes to you in a circle and show its relationship to a previous idea by drawing a line to another circle. The further you carry each branch or arm, the more detailed the information becomes. That kind of detail will be essential as you move to the drafting stage.
6. Journaling. This is not exactly a diary, but you can put anything in it you want. Carry around a small notebook and jot down whatever comes to mind. Besides being an excellent way to simply practice writing and try out new techniques, this is a great strategy to deal with new concepts. Eventually, this can become an excellent source for ideas and images and a way to understand your own creative process. The bottom line: the *more* you write, the *better* you will write. Period.
7. Research. Students often associate research exclusively with library work, but that is just one aspect of it. Research involves reading, but it can also be approached scientifically as well. Set up situations and try them out on your friends or on groups of strangers, or create and distribute a survey related to your topic. Besides giving you something to write about, this technique provides you with lots of specific evidence. Also, try interviewing someone to find out more about something that interests you. This kind of creative research is called field research, and it can often be as valuable, if not more so, than traditional “library” research.

## Writing

Once you feel as if you have generated enough information to draft your paper, it's time to move to the writing stage. Write in a way that works for you; the key is to start. You might prefer to handwrite your first draft or to compose at a computer. In the long run, it does not matter as long as you begin. Some students get so caught up in the earlier stage that they delay writing the paper. This is another form of procrastination, and you should watch out for it. Remember this is just a *first* draft. Your goal is to get your ideas down as completely as possible. Do not worry about mechanics and spelling right now; too much concern for those things at this early stage often thwarts the creative process. Whatever you do, know that you will be revising what you write several times before you turn it in. Do not assume that what you write as a draft is good enough as the final essay. Revision is simply an expectation at the college level.

As you write, include your own observations and comments as often as possible if this is something that is acceptable to your instructor. Though often faculty want students to focus solely on information, making personal insights questionable, many faculty will encourage you to make the paper your own by presenting what you have read, experienced, or heard with an analytical view. Remember that your instructors are

reading dozens and dozens of essays; anything you can do to set your own writing apart, to make it unique, can only be beneficial in the long run.

Though the writing you do at ECC will vary from class to class and instructor to instructor, one thing that remains constant is that virtually every essay will have a title, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Of course, entire books are written on this subject, and you would be wise to have some kind of rhetoric (a traditional college English textbook) that explains these more fully. For now, though, here is a brief checklist to use to help you with each element.

### Title

1. Does my title clearly communicate the content of my paper? Suggestion: be sure to put a title on *everything* you write! Also, do not simply mimic the description of the assignment (“My Personal Experience” or “Essay #1” is not likely to lure readers into your writing!)

### Introduction

1. Do I have a thesis statement that includes the topic and controlling idea of my essay? Avoid “announcing” your topic (i.e., “In this essay, I will show you that....” At the college level, this is a bit too obvious.)
2. Have I captured my reader’s interest (done through quotes, statistics, anecdotes, examples—whatever you think will draw your readers into the world of your writing)? Remember that whatever approach you select should be appropriate to your topic.
3. Does my introduction establish the tone of the essay? Is that tone appropriate for the content of my essay?
4. Have I considered my audience?
5. Is my introduction short and to the point?

### Body

1. Is each paragraph thoroughly developed? Keep an eye out for short paragraphs; in and of themselves, they are not bad, but they may be signs of lack of development.
2. Are the sentences within each paragraph related to the main point of that paragraph? Remember that a paragraph is a unit of meaning, and all sentences within a paragraph should relate to one another. The best way to accomplish this is to have clear topic sentences.
3. Have I used traditional patterns to develop my paragraphs: definition, description, example, classification, analogy, cause-effect, comparison-contrast, analysis? Of course, you will not use all of these in any given essay, but you should be comfortable enough with them that you can incorporate them into your writing when necessary. Remember that any composition text can provide complete explanations of these patterns.

4. Have I organized my paragraphs effectively: general to specific, specific to general, time, or space?

### Conclusion

1. Does my conclusion summarize the main points of my essay *without* repeating them in an obvious way? (Suggestion: Avoid statements such as “In conclusion,” “To wrap things up,” and the like. Readers should know they are coming to the conclusion.)
2. Does my conclusion leave my readers with something additional to consider?

## **Revising**

Revising refers to making changes in the content and/or organization of your paper. This is very different from what most students think revising is: editing. They are separated here because they are separate processes. Think of revision as a step that includes large changes: refining your thesis, adding information, rearranging paragraphs, and making adjustments to your introduction and/or conclusion. Editing, on the other hand, includes smaller (though no less important!) changes: mechanics, punctuation, spelling, documentation, and manuscript appearance. If you expect to turn in a final product that is polished, both processes are absolutely necessary. Most writing teachers suggest you focus on revising first and then, when you are sure that the content is as you want it, turn your attention to editing. Below are some guidelines for effective revision; strategies for thorough editing are in the section immediately following.

### Content and Purpose

Learn to read your writing out loud; this is a tremendously valuable revision tool and one that most students overlook. It may be awkward at first, but reading out loud provides a number of advantages: catching obvious mistakes (leaving a small word out, such as *the*, or inverting letters, like *hte* instead of *the*), “hearing” the flow of your writing, listening for transitions, etc. In addition, it’s a good habit to let others read your writing *to you*; to accomplish this, just print out two copies of your essay, find someone who is willing to read your essay, and listen, pencil in hand, ready to make changes.

As you read over your essay, you should be able to answer yes to the following questions. If any answer is no, you have some areas to revise.

1. Is my purpose clear?
2. Is my thesis clear? (These are not the same thing!)
3. Do I stick with my thesis throughout the essay? If not, where do I move away from it?
4. Are my main points clear?
5. Are my main points well-developed? If not, where do I need to add more support? What kind of support would be best to use?

6. Have I fulfilled the expectation of the assignment (purpose, assigned length, outside sources, etc)? In other words, have I written the essay I was supposed to write, or did I somehow head in a different direction?

### Organization

As you read over your essay again, think carefully about the *arrangement* of your ideas. Remember that nothing in writing is accidental; the way your essay appears is the way *you* chose to write it. Being aware of the different choices available to you is your responsibility as a writer. Again, you should be able to answer yes to the following. If not, think about ways to improve the organization of your essay.

1. Does my paragraphing indicate that I have important points to make? A good rule of thumb: in a “standard,” typed academic essay, you should have two or three paragraph breaks per page. Any significant variation from this should be studied (though there may be a legitimate reason for this). The main point here is not to go on for pages without giving your readers a break.
2. Have I used transitions convincingly to show the *connections* between my ideas?
3. Have I *arranged* the paragraphs effectively?

### **Editing**

Though editing appears as the last step in the writing process, that may be a bit misleading. Many writers find that they edit as they write, which is fine. After all, it seems rather silly to overlook an error when you see it just because you are not officially in the “editing” stage. On the other hand, don’t assume that you will necessarily identify these possible errors in the earlier stages; there is no substitute for careful and thorough editing. Below are some specific suggestions to make your editing more effective.

### Sentence Structure and Diction

Read your essay again, paying close attention to sentence structure and diction. You should be able to respond yes to the following questions; if not, consult any college English handbook for additional suggestions or for definitions of terms you do not understand.

1. Does my use of language (formal or informal) fit my subject and purpose?
2. Is my word choice specific, concrete, and exact?
3. Have I avoided clichés (“back in the day”) and slang expressions (“sick”)?
4. Have I included all words that are needed in my sentences?
5. Have I avoided wordiness? (Avoid constructions like: “In my opinion, I think that...” or “The most important thing above all else is....” These are repetitious and contribute to the “bulky” feeling sometimes inherent in student writing.)

6. Are my pronoun references clear? Pay special attention to indefinite pronouns, most of which are singular: everybody, anyone, somebody, etc.
7. Have I varied the length and structure of my sentences to add interest?
8. Have I avoided shifts in verb tense, person, and number?

### Punctuation and Mechanics

Finally, turn your attention to line-by-line editing. You might find a ruler helpful to isolate individual lines. A good strategy to follow is to read through your essay several times as you edit but to look only for one type of error each time. Also, pay particular attention to the errors you know, from your previous experiences, you make. Isolating individual items in this way will allow you to spot (and fix) them more readily. Finally, remember that grammar checks and spell checks are wonderful tools and should be utilized to help you as you edit your writing. BUT, they do not catch everything! There is simply no substitute for thorough editing which *you* do, paper and pencil in hand. Most students sorely underestimate the amount of time needed for this kind of thorough editing; fifteen minutes per page is a good starting point. If you have questions about any of the terms, again a good college English handbook is indispensable. Below is a list of common writing problems to get you started.

1. Homonyms: there/their/they're, its/it's, too/to/two, your/you're, affect/effect (hint: spell-check will not tell you which one you need; it will only tell you if you have spelled it correctly. That's why there is no good substitute for simply *knowing* this stuff!)
2. Pronoun switching. Determine a pronoun case and stick with it.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> person: I, we (who is *we* anyway? Probably should avoid this.)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> person: you=reader (rarely used in college writing)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> person: he, she, it, they
3. Sentence boundaries: comma splices, fragments, run-ons, improper use of semi-colons
4. Appropriate sentence length and varied sentence patterns
5. Subordination and coordination
6. Transitions to help the reader navigate through the essay
7. Punctuation errors, especially commas and semi-colons
8. Agreement errors: subject/verb, pronoun/antecedent
9. Paragraph boundaries: single-topic/single-focus paragraphs are recommended
10. Comma use (after introductory elements and to separate two complete sentences joined by a conjunction are the two most common mistakes)

As should be obvious by now, the writing process is quite involved. It is necessary that you understand these steps and adhere to them with all your writing assignments so that you can produce your most effective writing. Your grades on those essays will likely improve as well.

One final suggestion: When you are in doubt about an assignment, you should talk with your instructor. Having made the assignment, he or she is best suited to address

your questions and steer you in the proper direction. Never be afraid to do this. That's why faculty are here!

### **THE WRITER'S ENVIRONMENT**

Understanding the importance of the writing process and how it relates to your success as a college student are essential. However, there are several things you can do to create a personal environment that helps you develop and improve as a writer. Most teachers recognize that what you do outside class has a direct impact on what happens in class. Some "standard" strategies include keeping journals and writing independently, but there are other valuable suggestions as well that will foster your writing abilities; these are listed below.

1. Reading: Most faculty recognize the shift that has taken place in the last 10 years or so as it relates to students reading (or not reading, as is more often the case). Television, film, music, the internet, and videogames dominate our society and diminish an interest in written language. Our fast-paced society often discourages reading because it lacks the visual stimulation provided by non-print media. This move away from the centrality of reading is evident everywhere: faculty observations, standardized test scores, students' inability to understand college-level texts enough to discuss them. To combat this, you should understand that there is much research that demonstrates that habitual readers excel as writers. The more you read, the better you will write. It's virtually automatic. Serious readers become more aware of how writing functions in the "real" world; a side benefit is that their own writing improves, and they become better critical readers of their own work. One way to establish this habit is to find a journal from your specific area of interest and read it for a semester or so. There's no need to subscribe to the journal since you will find most of them in our library. The point is to get beyond the "headline news" reading and challenge yourself.
2. The Write Place: The main goal of this writing lab is to support classroom instruction. Remember that your instructor is always your first resource, but if he or she is unavailable, writing consultants at the Write Place can provide valuable assistance. However, this is not an editing facility. The consultants, many of whom are also faculty, can certainly help with errors that you have and suggest strategies to avoid them, but you will find them most helpful with the planning and drafting stages of your work. Reference resources and materials are available at the Write Place as are handbooks for specialized writing tasks. For more on The Write Place, see pp. 59-60.
3. Conferences: This was already mentioned but bears repeating. Informal conferences with your instructors can provide invaluable assistance as you work on your assignments. The informal setting creates a more relaxed atmosphere, one that often makes it more conducive for faculty and students to work together. This type of collaboration is quite common in the

workplace, and you should work to develop these skills while still in college. Access to faculty is a source of pride at community colleges; learn to take advantage of it!

4. Computers: Most students do the majority of their writing on computers. If you have a home computer, then chances are you already do most of your writing on it. Also, the college is now almost completely wireless, meaning that you can use a laptop and gain access to the internet almost anywhere on campus. If you do not have a computer, however, there are many places on campus (ICT 126 is the main college computer lab but also the library) where you can have access to one to allow you the same advantages as students with their own computers. You will also find a number of your classes held in rooms equipped with computers that allow you to do some of your work on them. Keep in mind, though, that computers are *tools*. They will not write the essay for you, but there are a number of things you can do with your writing on a computer that make your job easier: cutting, pasting, moving, and deleting are much easier on a computer than the old days when those revision acts required re-typing. There are also style analyzers and grammar checks available that will help you identify certain patterns in your writing. These programs have limitations, though: they will not improve your writing at the touch of a button. Rather, they can help you focus on some features of language you might otherwise ignore. So certainly take advantage of computers, but remember there is no computer that can write the essay for you!

### **DEMYSTIFYING EVALUATION**

Students often have some misperceptions about the process of grading, and it is time to correct those. Evaluation has nothing to do with whether or not a particular faculty member “likes” you; many students think that this “likeability” is essential to receiving a good grade. From the faculty’s perspective, however, this is inaccurate. Faculty are more concerned with whether or not you are meeting the expectations of the assignments they create. In other words, have you completed the writing assignment you were given? The criteria for evaluation can vary from one writing assignment to the next, and your responsibility as a student is to adapt to those differences. For example, an assignment for an ethics course which requires taking a stand on an issue demands that the student understands the issue, has explored both sides of it, possesses a clear opinion, and has reasons and evidence to support that opinion. Writing for this assignment will be judged according to the goals of the assignment. Those goals might differ significantly from another assignment, for instance, in a biology class, where the student is asked to report the results of an experiment clearly and accurately. One of your main responsibilities as a student is to be flexible and understand that different forms of writing have different purposes. When you have questions about how your writing will be evaluated, your instructor, again, should be your first resource. You might also ask your instructor if he/she has any examples of “good” essays you might read. See the section

on “Writing in the Disciplines” (pp. 31-49) for some of these examples as well as instructor feedback on why they are effective essays.

Remember, too, that sometimes evaluation can occur without a formal grade. For example, you might submit a draft to your instructor that is returned to you with comments that encourage you to revise your work. Not receiving a grade does not mean your writing has not been evaluated because the comments themselves are intended to help you improve your writing. During the early stages of a writing project, responding to drafts without grading them is common practice in the English department to assure that the final, graded draft is as effective as possible; however, faculty in other areas often encourage students to submit drafts prior to the final due date for an assignment. Do not miss these opportunities! Sometimes you may be way off track with an assignment, and submitting a draft is one way to discover that. If you do not, then you will probably suffer the consequence of a lower grade than you might otherwise have received if you had asked your instructor for feedback on a draft.

Finally, remember that responding to student writing takes a lot of time. A lot of time! Faculty who offer this constructive criticism are doing it to help you improve, not to gain some kind of weird pleasure by pointing out any weaknesses you may have. Writing well is a reflection of who you are, and, like it or not, you will often be judged by the quality of your writing, especially in the workplace. Faculty know this and want to help you refine and improve your writing skills while you are still in college. Much research suggests that the ability to write well is one important element necessary for advancement in the professional world, and so faculty willing to take a critical look at your writing are only trying to help you in the long run.

### **BASIC GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING WRITING**

Despite the earlier suggestion that criteria for evaluating writing should remain flexible, there are some general guidelines that can be useful as you think about your writing and whether or not it meets the assignment’s expectations. Though these guidelines are used in the English department and to assess general education outcomes for writing, they can also serve to set standards on any writing assignment. Note that these are NOT necessarily the criteria faculty will use to assess their students’ writing; those decisions fall to the individual instructors. However, they can be a useful *guide* as you think about how to judge the effectiveness of your writing.

- An *A* essay is strong in all areas on composition. It is particularly distinguished in content, containing an interesting, original thesis that is fully developed with concrete and vivid detail and language that is fresh and precise. The organization is clear and logical, while usage and mechanics show few if any deviations from the conventions of standard written English. What distinguishes an *A* essay in particular is the maturity of its thought.
- A *B* essay is solid in all areas of composition. It is distinguished by full development of a worthwhile topic and strong, logical organization. The

paper shows few, if any, deviations from standard mechanics. Its diction is precise and appropriate.

- A *C* essay is a sound composition. It is characterized by a worthwhile thesis given sufficient treatment to validate it. The paper is orderly in its presentation of ideas and contains few deviations from standard English.
- A *D* essay is weak in one or more areas of composition. It is difficult to understand because of poor organization, inadequate development, vague thesis, errors in grammar, or frequent misuse of language. The *D* essay is poor composition, just barely passing work.
- A *F* essay is unacceptable in one or more of the areas of composition. It may contain several serious grammatical errors, imprecise or misleading expressions, illogical organization, or negligible content.

Remember, instructors judge a student's work in the context of a specific assignment. A student who writes a good essay may thus receive a low grade if he or she fails to do the assignment in part or in full. Also, the grade is not a mere summary of the student's performance in each area but expresses the essay's overall effectiveness. Because lack of control in one of the major areas of composition often severely limits a paper's effectiveness, an essay that fails in any one area may be given a failing grade.

## RUBRICS

In the last several years, rubrics have become a common method for faculty to assess student assignments. From papers to projects, there are a number of advantages to rubrics. From the faculty member's perspective, rubrics allow for grade consistency, make grading quicker, and provide needed feedback on students' mastery of key course concepts. From the student's perspective, rubrics can provide needed motivation to excel, enable recognition that grading is not an "arbitrary" process, and encourage better preparation of the work since the instructor's expectations are made clear. Though there are many variations to rubrics, they have two main things in common: specific criteria (or categories) to be evaluated and a scoring system (sometimes numerical—ie points or percentages—and sometimes qualitative—ie, excellent, good, fair, etc). Below is a fairly standard example of a rubric provided by Mrs. Sara Baker, English Department. It effectively illustrates these features.

**Assignment Name**  
**Grading Rubric (-- points)**

Evaluation Criteria	Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average
	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)
	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)
	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)
	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)	(x - x points)

## SOME ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT WRITING

An earlier section of this handbook identified several strategies to help you revise and edit your writing. In this section, you will find some additional assistance as you polish your essays. These areas should be addressed before you submit your final work.

### **Appearance**

*Should I type my paper?*

Unless your instructor states otherwise, you should assume that any significant writing assignment should be typed. It makes your writing look more professional (which hopefully reflects the thorough job you have done), and it is also *much* easier on the eyes. Remember, faculty are not just reading your paper but often 60 or 80 other ones; this is hard work, and anything you can do to make the job easier will certainly be appreciated. Also, remember that a neatly typed paper cannot disguise serious problems with your essay. Sometimes, handwritten assignments are acceptable, but it is best to make sure with your instructor first.

*What word processor should I use?*

The standard at ECC is Microsoft Word. Writing your documents in this format will make things easier for you, especially if you find yourself writing on campus as well as at home. If you do not have Word at home, then you should get in the habit of saving your files as rich text format (.rtf), which will allow you to move from another program, such as Word Perfect or Microsoft Works, to Word more easily.

If you are unfamiliar with word processing and want to learn more, many courses are offered through the Office Administration Technology department; consult a current schedule for courses and times.

*Does my essay have an effective title?*

Everything you write for college should have a title, and it should be given serious consideration, not simply tacked on as an afterthought. Essays with no titles or with unoriginal ones (i.e., “Essay #1” or “My Personal Experience Essay”) do little to draw readers in, and they often reflect poorly on the writer, you. Let’s say, for example, that you are writing an essay on cigarette advertising and its use of sexual images. A title such as “Cigarettes and Sex” is much more interesting than “The Role of Sexual Images in Cigarette Advertising” but not *nearly* as appealing as “Strike it Lucky!” (a reference not only to a particular brand of cigarettes but to sexual imagery as well). A reader encountering an essay with the last title is more likely to be intrigued and interested to read what follows. Try to do the same with your essays.

## Manuscript Guidelines

*What should my essay look like?*

The following are some general guidelines. Keep in mind, however, that your instructor may have specific requirements that vary from these; if so, then follow those instead.

1. Type all papers and use double-spacing.
2. Number your pages in the upper right corner. Most word processors have a pagination command, so be sure you know how to use it.
3. Your last name should appear on each page after the first (it's best to put it right next to the page number).
4. Use a standard size 12 font. Faculty are well aware of what happens when students switch font size, so don't even try it. Also be sure the style you select is a readable one; Times New Roman and Courier New are most preferred.
5. Use standard 8 ½ x 11 paper.
6. Staple or paper clip your paper in the upper left corner; check first to be sure the pages are in order. Never fold over or rip corners to hold pages together.
7. Your instructor may have specific guidelines regarding the heading on your papers. If no guidelines are provided, you can use this MLA heading as a guide (double-spaced throughout, starting at the left margin):

Your Name  
 Your Instructor's Name  
 Course Number and Section  
 Date

Centered Title

Here's an example:

Michele Noel  
 Dr. James Doe  
 English 101-24  
 April 4, 2010

Strike It Lucky!

A few things to note about the title: Notice it is not bold-faced, italicized, quadruple spaced, or typed in a larger font. Students often do this, and it is inappropriate. A great resource for questions regarding formatting as well as other writing issues is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab ([www.owl.english.purdue.edu](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu)).

## Paragraphing/Organization

*Does my introduction appeal to my reader?*

Writing, and writing well, is a matter of choices made by the writer. The more aware you are of the choices at your disposal, the better you will become. Except when it comes to things such as grammar and punctuation, there is *never* only one way to do something. This is certainly the case with introductions. Clearly your opening paragraph should attract your reader's attention and generate interest, but this can be done through a variety of methods; the best method depends on your audience and purpose. In some situations, beginning with a direct quote (which should be documented) is the best approach; other times, you may find statistics or a personal anecdote works better. The trick is to know what your options are and be willing to experiment.

Students often devote very little attention to writing a good introduction, and they fail to realize how critical that introduction is to the overall success of the essay. To illustrate this importance, imagine the following scenario (I often use this example with my own students!): Your instructor walks in on the day a major paper is due, and he or she says the following: "For this essay, I have decided that I am going to read only ten essays instead of all of them. Hopefully, your essay will be one of the ten." Now, you know this will not happen because the instructor's job, to a large extent, is to assess your work. However, if you had to identify the criteria used to determine which ten will be read in this hypothetical scenario, the safest bet would be the effectiveness of the introduction. If you do not foster reader interest there, you are likely not going to create it anywhere else. Even from a self-preservation standpoint, you know your instructor is reading many essays, and you want to be sure yours is the one that catches his or her attention, so special attention to the introduction is mandatory.

*Does the order of my paragraphs make sense?*

An organized essay contains a meaningful sequence of paragraphs; it's not an accident. When you are in the early stages of drafting, paragraphing may not be that important because you are just trying to get everything down. Once you turn your attention to your readers, however, and recognize that someone else has to understand what you have written, paragraphing becomes more critical. It's helpful to think of paragraphs as signals to your readers since they indicate when ideas are shifting. Just as your essay is composed of many ideas, it should have many paragraphs to convey those ideas. All too often, students convey *many* ideas in *one* paragraph, and that is simply overwhelming to readers. There are even situations when students turn in entire essays that are single paragraphs; this is simply unacceptable at the college level.

Besides knowing when to break for paragraphs, you should also give serious thought to the *arrangement* of those paragraphs. Knowing what to say and when are challenges all writers face. Remember, though, nothing happens accidentally in writing, so think about the best order of your paragraphs based on your audience and purpose. Also, do not be afraid to change the order. Sometimes the first way is not the best; try a different order and see what you think. This is one of the great advantages of writing with a computer; it takes only a few seconds to make major changes in a paper's organization, and you can look at your options to see which works best.

## Methods of Development

*Have I used appropriate methods of development in my essay?*

In the past, it would have been typical for writing teachers to ask their students to write papers simply to practice certain modes of development or methods of organization. These strategies, many of which are already familiar to you, included comparison-contrast, narration, causal analysis, classification, description, and argument, among others. The problem was that, outside of English classrooms, the methods had very little utility and often frustrated students who were simply asked to write “essays” but not told how to develop them. Today, students are instead given an assignment which requires the use of the methods identified above but has a separate purpose (not all in one essay, of course). Changes in composition theory support this shift and stress the importance of function or purpose *before* form rather than the reverse. Good writers recognize this as well, and it would be to your advantage to learn these methods but to recognize that they become important *after* you have identified your purpose with a particular essay. In other words, do not put the cart before the horse.

Let’s look at two examples to illustrate this difference. Consider the following two assignments:

- A. Write an essay to a future employer about an experience in which you learned something meaningful or which you still need to figure out.
- B. Choose a local issue about which you feel strongly and take a position on it. Remember to use strong reasons and evidence to support your position. You must also demonstrate evidence that you have acknowledged potential objections.

Assignment A suggests a *narrative* approach that likely will follow a chronological pattern, yet notice the words “Write a narrative essay...” were not used. That’s the difference described above. Beginning writers are usually comfortable with this approach and will have little difficulty writing the essay. Narrative writing, while common in English classes, may not be as common in other disciplines. It is only one type of writing among many with which you should be familiar.

Assignment B presents a different challenge: it asks the student to demonstrate an understanding of a local issue, analyze both sides of the issue, and then take a position on that issue and support it. It requires the student not only to define the issue but also to *argue* for or against it. In this essay, a *narrative* method of development would be ineffective as a guiding principle. The ordering of ideas will not be dictated by time and events but rather by logic and evidence.

Both assignments require appropriate, but very different, methods of development. Your job as a student and as a writer is to recognize these different situations as they arise and respond accordingly.

## Detail/Support

*Does my writing include a legitimate balance between the general and the specific, the concrete and the abstract?*

Chances are, the specific details you bring to bear on your writing are what will make it unique and memorable for readers. Despite thoughts to the contrary, an unlimited number of writing topics does not exist. What *does* exist is great variation among writers. So, even though you may not be the first to write about a pivotal moment of adolescence (such as getting your driver's license, prom, your first "real" party, whatever), why income tax laws should be changed, or the connection between television viewing and violence, you *are* the first to write about the topic from *your* point of view. Take advantage of this opportunity. Use detail that will appeal to readers and be appropriate to your topic at the same time.

## Documentation

*If my paper includes outside sources, have I cited them properly?*

Though a later section in this handbook is devoted to strategies to avoid plagiarism and the college's official policy on plagiarism, a few words are appropriate now. Students sometimes are given misinformation about when they should and should not document their writing. Here is the bottom line: any time you are using a source's words or ideas, the information *must* be documented. By operating with this overriding principle, you will avoid plagiarism. This is important to note because many faculty issue automatic failing grades to students who plagiarize. With recent technological advances (such as Google searches and the like), it is very easy to identify sources from which students are drawing parts of their essays; sometimes, students "download" entire essays from the web, and this is very easy for faculty to discover. Your best line of defense: simply don't do it. Instead, follow the guidelines presented in any college handbook regarding the documentation of sources.

Students often allow themselves to get overwhelmed when documenting their papers. A few practical suggestions might reduce that likelihood. First, there is no single method of documentation. As you encounter different disciplines of study, you will discover they have preferred methods for documentation. Just accept it. Yes, life would be easier if you only had to know one approach, but life isn't always easy. Fortunately, there are two that are most common at the college level: MLA (which stands for Modern Language Association) and APA (which stands for American Psychological Association). Second, rarely will you be asked to memorize the information pertaining to the documentation of your sources. Instead, most instructors simply expect you to use the chosen method (MLA, APA, CBE, or any of a number of others) properly. Printed style guides as well as online resources are available to assist you with this. Basically, you will need to know what kind of source you have (online article, interview, TV show, encyclopedia, whatever), and then you will look for that "pattern" in the style guide. From that point, it's basically fill in the blank. Third, try to find some concrete examples

of papers incorporating the method you have been asked to use. Your instructor might have examples from former students that you can read, or he or she can direct you to professional journals that utilize that method.

## **Mechanics**

*Have I proofread my paper for errors in punctuation, grammar, and spelling?*

You are familiar enough with the rules of language, to know that there's something wrong; with what your reading might know. Though you could *understand* what I *meant* to write, the errors obviously interfere with effective communication. When the errors extend over three, five, or even ten pages, imagine how frustrated the reader (and your instructor!) might become. Don't fool yourself into thinking that proper grammar and mechanics are important only in English classes. Faculty in other disciplines may reduce the grade an essay receives because of excessive errors or return it without a grade until it is more carefully edited. An essay that is full of errors reflects poorly on the writer (you), and as a result, readers (and your instructor!) might not take you very seriously. Fortunately, most of these errors are easily fixed or avoidable altogether.

To fix errors easily, take advantage of your word processor. Certainly spell-check can help with obvious misspellings (*thier* for *their*, for example), but it does not always help with what are called contextual spelling errors (*their* vs. *there* vs. *they're*); as long as you spell each one correctly, it does not tell you which one you need. Using an *edit/find* function might help, however. This enables you to type in a word (such as *there*) or mark of punctuation (a comma, for example), and the computer will find every time it appears. Now, certainly not all of the ones it finds are wrong; the advantage here, however, is that it *isolates* the word or mark of punctuation to allow you to scrutinize it more carefully.

One way to reduce your error rate is to pay attention to the errors you make. I know, that sounds very obvious, but most students ignore what writing teachers often call a "pattern of error." This means that you might be prone to certain types of errors. In other words, if fragments are problematic for you, they most likely occur every time you write, and so your responsibility as a writer is to work to eliminate that problem so that it disappears in *all* the writing you do; the error should *not* appear over and over again. The "pattern of error," however, is often different for each student. So your problem might be fragments while someone else struggles with commas. You need to know what your "pattern" is and work to minimize the errors. One way to do that is to keep a log that tracks your problem areas and ways to fix them.

Another way to reduce errors is to read your writing out loud. I mentioned this earlier, and most students underestimate its effectiveness. Something strange happens to us as we write: we often become very attached to what we have produced and, even when errors are present in black and white, our mind often prevents us from seeing them. I call this strange phenomenon "Willing things to be there when they really aren't," and reading out loud is one way to reduce it. For example, let's say you have written this sentence: "My family is very fun-loving and energetic, and they throw many parties."

When you read it silently to yourself, your mind is likely seeing this: “My family is very fun-loving and energetic, and they throw many parties.” The problem is, that’s not what your reader is seeing. You are seeing what you *think* you wrote or what you *intended* to write; your reader is seeing what is actually on the page. When this sort of thing happens repeatedly in an essay, your reader (and your instructor) may not take what you have to say very seriously. So, again, the bottom line here is READ OUT LOUD. It is not an infallible technique, but you will be surprised at how many things you do catch this way!

### **A Final Thought**

None of these features of writing is more important than another. Your job as a writer is to develop proficiency in all of them. Successful writing requires that you do a lot of different things well; focusing on one thing only, such as content, will reduce your effectiveness as a writer. Similarly, a perfectly edited essay that bores readers with meaningless content will be equally unsuccessful. You need to develop and combine many abilities, and the more willing you are to recognize this, the more successful your writing will be. The most effective way to improve your writing, then, is to devote attention to *all* aspects of the writing process.

As a writer, you already have certain strengths and weaknesses (and you may even know what they are). The main goal of any writing class is to expose you to new challenges and to minimize or eliminate any weaknesses that keep you from effective communication. However, your proficiency as a writer should continue to evolve beyond your composition courses and into your other college classes and your professional life. That kind of continual growth is essential and to be expected.

## SECTION II: OVERCOMING WRITING PROBLEMS

### A WORKSHEET TO AVOID PROCRASTINATION

It is extremely important that you understand exactly what your writing assignment is and what you must do to complete it effectively and efficiently. The dangers of procrastination have already been mentioned several times, and you already know that writing is a *process* that can take several weeks to complete, depending on the nature of the assignment. Notice that the components here mimic what was discussed in the earlier section on "Writing as a Process" (pp. 5-12). The following worksheet should help you adhere to the features of the process and meet your deadlines as well.

Remember that your instructor is probably not going to assign these different deadlines; more likely than not, you will just be given a final due date for the paper, so it is up to you to decide on reasonable dates for these different steps to be sure your final draft is as effective as possible.

#### STEPS IN PROCESS

#### DEADLINE DATES

1. Write a purpose statement for your paper based on the assignment. What are you trying to accomplish in the paper?

Statement:

2. Establish some deadlines.

Due date: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of days or weeks to work on paper: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Understand the assignment:

--limit focus

--work on thesis

Deadline date: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Identify sources if necessary:

--read related materials

--locate available sources in library

--take notes from sources

--line up interviews for field

Research if appropriate

--keep track of sources for documentation purposes

Deadline date: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Organize main points:

--be sure you have support for each

--look for balance

Deadline date: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Write first draft:

Deadline date: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Revise your first draft: Deadline date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 --get another opinion on your draft (from peer or instructor)  
 --go to the Write Place for help  
 --allow your paper to sit over night (at least) so you can return to it with a fresh eye.
8. Prepare final draft: Deadline date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 --carefully proofread your essay  
 --check manuscript form  
 --make a copy of your paper before submitting it to your instructor

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR**

I thought it might be really awesome and totally cool to, like, illustrate the importance of accuracy and correctness by writing a passage full of all kinds of dumb and stupid mistakes. College students often think that teaches, and most specially English teachers, is the only ones which really care about this kind of stuff. But the real truth is that good writing matters in the real world all kinds of good and important research suggests this to be the case. And it is the faculty's job to help you develop these necessary skills. I admit, some faculty believed that pointing out errors is to overwhelming a task given our society's apparent indifference to language, they think that it's a hopeless. I, however, thought that college students would get a kick out of a clever way to emphasize these errors. In any case, rather than gave you a list of errors, which most of you have seen before (see page 11). I decided to write this passage so you could appreciate what it feels like to read prose littered with errors the average person could recognize.

This passage probably commits more than ten stupid errors and probably leaves out a lot of others that are common place. Some could of been caught with a word processor if you bothered to use it. Most students hope that eventually a computer will catch every thing. Making careful line-by-line editing unnecessary. If I was you, however, I would'nt hold your breathe!

### **EDITING TIPS/COMMON EDITING SYMBOLS**

In all seriousness, editing is an important component to writing well. Many students mistakenly conclude that this is only important to English teachers. This is simply not true! Writing is a critical element to many of the courses you will be taking, and faculty in those disciplines value not only understanding the content but also effectively expressing yourself in relation to that content. Below you will find a series of editing symbols (provided by Dr. Bill Demaree from the English department but fairly standard) that should help you. You might notice faculty in other disciplines (not just English!) using these as well.

**Ab faulty abbreviation:** An abbreviation has been used inappropriately. Write out the word. In academic writing use *number* rather than *no.*, *August* rather than *Aug.*, *first* rather than *1st*.

**Apos apostrophe error:** There is an error in a contraction (*don't*) or a possessive (*teacher's office*). There may be an apostrophe used incorrectly in a plural. (*Two boy's were in the car with me.*)

**Case error in pronoun case:** The wrong pronoun form — subjective, objective, possessive — is used. (Wrong: *Him and I went to high school together. The casino divided the winnings between my friend and I.* Correct: *He and I went to high school together. The casino divided the winnings between my friend and me.*)

**Cap capitalization error:** A word is incorrectly capitalized (*I graduated from High School.*) or a word that should be capitalized is not (*I graduated from Elgin high school.*)

**Cs comma splice:** Two independent clauses have been incorrectly joined with a comma. Replace the comma with a semicolon (;) or a comma and a coordination conjunction. (*Every student should stay awake in class, it is the only way to pass the test.*)

**Dm dangling modifier:** A modifying word or phrase has no word to modify. (*Arriving late for class, my professor glared at me as I took my seat.*)

**frag fragment:** A phrase or clause has been “fragmented” from the sentence to which it belongs. Generally, you can correct the error by connecting the fragment to the sentence that precedes it or follows it.

**mm misplaced modifier:** A modifying word or phrase has been placed too far from the word or phrase it modifies (*He only earned ten dollars rather than He earned only ten dollars.*)

**MS manuscript error:** The essay does not follow the conventions of academic manuscripts : page numbers, titles, margins, type size, fonts, etc..

**num error in the use of numbers:** Generally, numerals have been used (*5, 10*) when writing them out is more appropriate (*five, ten*).

**P punctuation error:** There is an error in the use of a comma, semicolon, colon, dash, or other punctuation mark.

**Pro Agr pronoun agreement error:** The pronoun does not agree with its antecedent. (*A student should turn off their cell phone while in class.*)

**Pro Ref pronoun reference error:** The pronoun does not refer clearly to one and only one antecedent. (*Hamlet tells Horatio that he must establish the king's guilt.*)

**Ro run-on sentence:** Two sentences have been incorrectly joined (“run together” or “fused”) with no conjunction or punctuation. (*The man on the stage is Mr. Zickefoose he is the conductor of the local symphony.*)

**shift/pro shift in pronoun:** This passage makes several distracting and unnecessary shifts between first person (*I, me, we, us*), second person (*you, your*), and third person (*he, him, they, them*).

**shift/tense shift in verb form:** This passage makes several unnecessary and distracting shifts between present tense and past tense.

**sp spelling error:** One or more words are misspelled in this line. To solve the problem, review basic spelling rules, check the dictionary, use a spell checker, and proofread more carefully.

**ss sentence structure error:** The meaning of the sentence is unclear because of awkward phrasing or garbled syntax.

**SV Agr subject-verb agreement error:** The subject and verb in this sentence do not agree. (*One of the students are here. There is many reasons.*)

**trans weak transition:** The passage is weakened by a lack of appropriate transition words or phrases between paragraphs or sentences.

**vb verb form error:** This line has an error in the form of a verb (*I should have wrote it down.*)


**w wordiness:** A sentence or phrase has more words than needed to accurately convey its meaning. (*My car is red in color.*) (*There is a new cartoon series premiering this fall. Better: A new cartoon series premieres this fall.*)

**ww wrong word:** A homonym of the intended word has been used incorrectly: *there* rather than *their*, *to* rather than *too*, *where* rather than *were*, etc. Remember that spell check programs will not help locate these errors. A list of commonly misused words is at the end of this pamphlet.

**para faulty parallelism:** The items in this series are in different grammatical units. To correct the error, revise the series so that all items are in the same grammatical units: all nouns, all clauses, all prepositional phrases, etc. (Wrong: *In my speech class, we learned to control anxiety, outlining, and correct enunciation.* Correct: *In my speech class, we learned to control anxiety, to make outlines, and to enunciate correctly.*)

**¶ paragraph error:** There is an error in paragraph length. Either one paragraph has been inappropriately divided into several small units, or several smaller paragraphs have been incorrectly combined as one.

### Commonly Misused Words

 **Affect:** to influence (a verb): *This essay examines how poverty **affects** a child’s education.*

- ✍ **Effect:** a result (noun): *The author claims that poverty has a profound **effect** on a child's education.*
- ✍ **A lot:** two words; there is no such word as "alot."
- ✍ **Choose:** present tense: *I must **choose** a job soon.*
- ✍ **Chose:** past tense: *I **chose** to work for AT&T.*
- ✍ **Could of; would of:** Incorrect forms of *could have* and *would have*.
- ✍ **Its:** possessive pronoun: *Every dog has **its** day.*
- ✍ **It's:** contraction for "it is": ***It's** important to use an organizer to plan your week.*
- ✍ **Than:** comparison: *Amsterdam is more lively **than** Rotterdam.*
- ✍ **Then:** adverb: *I visited Rotterdam; **then** I visited Amsterdam.*
- ✍ **Their:** possessive: *The Republicans have maintained **their** majority in Congress.*
- ✍ **There:** "at that place": *Northern California is a beautiful place, but I don't go **there** very often.*
- ✍ **They're:** contraction for "they are": *If **they're** smart, novices will never go swimming alone.*
- ✍ **To:** a preposition (*to the store*) or part of an infinitive (*to win the race*).
- ✍ **Too:** "also": *I want to play **too**.*
- ✍ **Two:** number: *I had **two** lattes this morning.*
- ✍ **Were:** Past tense of "to be": *Americans **were** asked to make many sacrifices during World War II.*
- ✍ **We're:** contraction for "we are": *As Americans, **we're** used to having easy access to lots of information.*
- ✍ **Where:** "At what place": *As students, we need to know **where** to look on the Internet for reliable information.*
- ✍ **Your:** possessive pronoun: *The only life you can really control is **your** own.*
- ✍ **You're:** contraction for "you are": *If you wait until the last minute, **you're** really in trouble.*

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Faculty agree that one of their main responsibilities is assuring the integrity of the work students submit and, by extension, the integrity of the institution as a whole. Academic integrity is essential to intellectual growth; thus, honesty is expected in all student endeavors. Be aware that plagiarism, whether intentional or the result of careless inattention to documentation, often results in automatic failure of the assignment and could lead to an *F* for the course. Any form of cheating--on essays or exams or any other assignment--can have the same consequence.

Below is ECC's plagiarism policy, taken directly out of the college catalog. This policy attempts to correct any misinformation and explain plagiarism in simple, concrete terms.

## **ECC POLICY ON PLAGIARISM:**

ECC has a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism is academic theft and is a highly serious offense both within the college community and in civil law. A student found guilty of plagiarism will receive an automatic grade of “F” for the entire course in which the plagiarism occurs, and additional disciplinary sanctions may be imposed against the student.

### **Plagiarism defined:**

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person’s written words or ideas as one’s own. Students are guilty of plagiarism if they submit as their own work:

- part or all of a written assignment copied from another person’s manuscript or notes
- part or all of an assignment copied or paraphrased from a source, such as a book, magazine, pamphlet or electronic document, without giving proper documentation
- a paper purchased from any vendor
- reusing or modifying a previously submitted paper for a present assignment without obtaining prior permission from the instructors involved
- the sequence of ideas, arrangement of material, pattern of thought of someone else, even though it is expressed in the student’s own words; plagiarism occurs when such a sequence of ideas is transferred from a source to a paper without the processes of digestion, integration and reorganization in the writer’s mind, and without acknowledgement in the paper.

### **Students are guilty of being accomplices to plagiarism if they:**

- allow their paper, in outline or finished form, to be copied and submitted as the work of another
- prepare a written assignment for another student and allow it to be submitted as that student’s own work
- keep or contribute to a file of papers with the clear intent that those papers will be copied or submitted as work of anyone other than the author; students who know their work is being
- copied are presumed to consent to its being copied.

Cases of plagiarism, suspected plagiarism, or being accomplices to plagiarism will initially be handled between the student and the instructor of the course. While plagiarism or assisting in plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances, it is also recognized that sometimes errors occur on the student’s part due to poor scholarship or inexperience and could be used as a further educational opportunity by the instructor of the course. In these cases, formal charges of plagiarism may be avoided and the instructor may require that the student’s assignment be rewritten or resubmitted. The extent of the penalty for the resubmission is up to the instructor of the course.

If the student and instructor of the course do not reach a satisfactory understanding, the student may follow the grade appeal procedure. Any subsequent grade appeal process must be completed before further disciplinary action is taken by the college against the student. This ensures the student appropriate due process in establishing the course grade. However, before undertaking the formal grade appeal process, a student needs to understand that the grade appeal must be based on solid evidence of being assigned an inappropriate grade by the instructor.

Upon completion of the resolution of the matter between the instructor and the student, and/or upon completion of the formal grade appeal process, the name of the student who has been found guilty of plagiarism will be sent to the office of the dean of students by the course instructor or the appropriate administrator. Any infraction of college policy will be recorded in a disciplinary record maintained in the office of the dean of students. Additionally, the college may, at its discretion, file further disciplinary charges against the student up to and including expulsion from the college. The office of the dean of students will contact the student if additional disciplinary charges are to be brought against the student.

### SECTION III: WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

As you progress through your college education, you will find yourself writing in virtually all your classes—sometimes in classes that you would never expect, such as math or computer science. But as I’ve already mentioned, writing has become an increasingly common means for students to display their knowledge. Surely you will still be taking exams, as they are an important element of assessment at the college level, but most classes provide multiple measures to assess student learning; one significant component is writing—whether it is in the form of short summaries of articles, essay exams, or research papers. In addition, you will find that, even though some traits of good writing remain constant across disciplines, there are often significant variations as well. Part of your responsibility as a college student, then, is to adjust to these different demands. Writing in math class is not *exactly* the same as writing in psychology or history or art. Your instructors will more than likely communicate their expectations to you, but it’s also helpful to look at some concrete examples to help you make these distinctions.

Below you will find several exemplary (ie, each received an “A” from the instructor) student essays from a variety of disciplines along with the instructor’s analysis of what contributed to the “A” grade. These essays include the following: a Psychology 100 paper with APA documentation, an English 101 essay with MLA documentation, a Biology 100 paper, and an essay exam response from a Psychology 100 class. The main point here is to understand that, first, instructors outside the English department assign a significant amount of writing; that, second, these instructors *value* good writing; and that, third, your responsibility as a student is to understand and adapt to these different expectations.

A note about appearance regarding these essays: to conserve space and reduce the number of pages necessary to print this guide, the spacing between the essays was condensed. Of course, it should be clear that a “real” essay would begin at the top of a page, for example. This is also true of the Works Cited page for the English essay—that would normally be its own page but is printed right at the end of the essay here to save space.

## Psychology 100 Sample Essay

ForsterLee, R., Horowitz, I. A., Ho, R., ForsterLee, L., & McGovern. (1999). Community members' perceptions of evidence: The effects of gender in a recovered memory civil trial. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 484-495.

### Summary

Past research (Clark & Nightingale, 1997, Loftus, 1993) has shown most jurors accept recovered memories as valid, but may view them as less credible. Loftus et al. (1993) and Golding et al. (1995) have also found that the genders of the victim and the juror are critical variables in determining jurors' assessments of credibility. Females are more likely to favor the 'victim' and more likely to believe that recovered memories are valid. Male 'victims' who report recovered memories are less likely to be believed while the source of a female's memory (recovered or not) does not seem to affect her credibility (Clark & Nightingale, 1997). The purpose of the present study was to directly test the effects of gender and recovered memories in a civil trial. The authors hypothesize that gender and repressed memories will influence jurors' decisions in the previously mentioned ways with the added possibility that jurors may be 'gender-empathetic' and be more likely to believe 'victims' of their own gender.

Participants were Australian community members with demographics similar to prospective jurors. A written transcript of a civil trial was given to the participants. One group read a case where the plaintiff's testimony was that the sexual abuse was a secret that the plaintiff revealed to a psychologist during therapy. The other group read that the plaintiff had no memory of the abuse for years after it occurred and then recovered the memories of abuse while in therapy with a psychologist. In some cases, the plaintiff was

male and in some female. Other facts of the case and expert testimony were the same for both groups. After reading the trial the jurors filled out forms indicating their verdict, compensation (on a 1 to 11 scale), assessment of plaintiff and defendant credibility (on a 1 to 5 scale), certainty of their verdict (on a 1 to 6 scale) and personal demographics.

The authors' hypotheses were mostly supported. Female jurors were more likely (96%) to find the defendant to blame and were more certain of their judgments in favor of the plaintiff than male jurors (80%). Overall, males appeared to show same-sex favoritism in terms of compensation ( $M=5.74$  for males vs.  $M=4.57$  for females). Male jurors were also more certain of their verdicts when the plaintiff was also male ( $M=5.56$  for males vs  $M=5.03$  for females).

Jurors were more certain in their judgments when assessing a plaintiff's secret memory ( $M=5.64$ ) compared with a repressed memory ( $M=5.639$ ). More compensation was awarded to female victims who reported a secret memory ( $M=6.37$ ) as compared with a repressed memory ( $M=4.11$ ) which, assuming that credibility forms the basis of compensation decisions, is contrary to previous research. Males received the same compensation regardless of condition ( $M=5.18$ ), but received less compensation than females overall ( $M=5.26$ ).

### Applications

These research findings have important implications for many aspects of our legal system particularly the jury selection process. The gender composition of the jury for a civil trial on recovered memories may be critical in determining liability and how much compensation is awarded. Specifically, if a male plaintiff is claiming a recovered memory, the plaintiff's lawyers will want the jury to have more male jurors than female

jurors who tend to be biased against males. Male jurors are more likely to find in favor of these male.

If a female plaintiff is claiming a recovered memory, having more female jurors may be best since they will be biased in favor of the female and will be more likely to find the defendant liable and award a higher compensatory amount. If a plaintiff can get the same-sex jurors in his/her favor to a greater extent than the defendant, a higher potential exists for a compensatory award for the plaintiff.

Both types of ‘jury-fixing’ are useful when a plaintiff is claiming a recovered memory given that jurors are less likely to believe these types of memory. Perhaps a better approach would be to avoid, if possible, introducing the source of the memory into court testimony. When this is not possible, judges may need to be more vigilant in overseeing the voir dire selection process to keep litigants from having an unfair advantage through ‘gender-empathy’.

As suggested by the authors, this research may also apply to other gender-relevant jury decisions such as sexual harassment, spousal abuse, etc. Though the results regarding recovered memories are less likely to be relevant to spousal abuse, the results regarding gender effects may also be useful in selecting a jury that is more likely to favor a particular case. To avoid this favoritism, gender-balanced juries may be an approach that the judicial system may want to endorse.

**Instructor’s Comments (Dr. Shawn Mikulay):** The assignment required the student to summarize a research article and explain how to apply the results of the study in a concrete way. This example was an A paper because it clearly explained the major elements of the article (theory, method, and results), the stated applications were feasible and direct reflections of the results of the study, and the logical flow of the writing was appropriate (each sentence was a logical progression from the previous sentence and was appropriately structured within the paragraph).

## English 101 Sample Essay

### We *Can* Make a Difference

The universe is huge. In fact, the universe is so incredibly huge that it is difficult to wrap our minds around the sheer magnitude of it. Where does it begin? Where does it end? No one knows. And yet, despite how immense our universe is, there is only one known planet that can support life as we know it. That planet, of course, is Earth, a unique and precious sphere teeming with life, beauty, mysteries and wonder.

Unfortunately, we tend to take our valuable home for granted, for it is easy to forget just how much our actions impact the environment. Those who point out the negative effects of our behaviors and ask us to change our ways are often scoffed at or ignored. This is especially true when it comes to the issue of global warming. Evidence shows that humans are largely responsible for causing this phenomenon, yet we continue to engage in old habits that only make it worse. Global warming is a serious issue affecting everyone, and so it is up to all of us to be more aware of our actions and change our harmful behaviors in order to protect our one and only home and...us.

These days, it is not uncommon to hear the phrase “global warming.” But what exactly is global warming? “Simply put, global warming is the increasing of Earth’s average surface temperature over time” (Johnson 6). It is evident that humans are causing this rise in temperature largely because of the enormous amounts of greenhouse gases that we relentlessly release into the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide, methane, and water vapor, are gases that, together, act like a blanket by trapping heat and warming Earth’s surface. These gases are important, for without them our planet would be a frigid iceland. However, when too many enter the atmosphere,

excessive heat is trapped, forcing temperatures to rise quickly and global warming to occur.

One of the main ways that humans are adding too many destructive gases, especially carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere is by burning fossil fuels, such as oil, natural gas, and coal. Ever since the Industrial Revolution of the 1800's, our everyday lives have become extremely dependent on fossil fuels. Cars burn oil, houses are heated with natural gas, and electricity is generated by burning coal, all of which emit huge amounts of carbon dioxide. According to Al Gore, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on climate change, "carbon dioxide usually gets top billing [for the rise in temperature] because it accounts for 80% of total greenhouse gas emissions" (28). In the year 2005 alone, the burning of fossil fuels released about 7.9 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and "carbon emissions increase every year" (Johnson 18).

As carbon dioxide emissions and temperatures continue to rise, global warming steadily worsens. All over the world, the consequences of a warming planet are being felt. Glaciers, icecaps, and the tundra are all melting at alarming rates. Ocean levels are beginning to rise, putting low-elevation coastal lands, such as Florida, San Francisco Bay, and Manhattan, in danger of being submerged in the future (Gore 198-200, 208). A changing climate is also causing weather patterns to go to extremes. While some areas of the world are experiencing heat waves and droughts, others are dealing with more frequent and severe storms. We are only too familiar with the destruction that harsh storms can create after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005. Lives were lost, homes were demolished, workplaces were destroyed, and economic losses were huge (Schmidt 96). Humans are not the only ones affected by global warming. Plants and

animals are being forced to find new habitats and to adjust the timing of their mating, migrating, nesting, and budding in order to survive. Those species that cannot adapt will inevitably die, decreasing the biodiversity of the Earth. Life as we know it may change dramatically if this warming trend that the Earth is experiencing continues.

Fortunately, global warming does not have to persist even though “we can’t reverse the situation” (Johnson 39). There are simple things that average people can do in their everyday lives to prevent global warming from worsening. With almost seven billion people on this planet, if we all make an effort to change some of our behaviors, we can make a world of difference. The key is for us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide.

One way to do this is to conserve electricity instead of wasting it. Nowadays, houses are loaded with appliances that run on the electricity generated by burning coal. When coal is burned, harmful greenhouse gases are given off into the air, and this can cause global warming to worsen. Because of this, we must make conscious efforts to turn off lights, computers, televisions, and other electronics when we are no longer using them. We must also attempt to change old habits, like leaving the television on for background noise while doing homework and being on the computer for hours on end. An additional way to conserve electricity is to let in the natural light from the sun instead of automatically flipping on a switch upon entering a room. These actions will not only save electricity and reduce our emissions, but they will help to noticeably decrease electric bills.

Another approach to cutting down on our emissions is to switch to more energy efficient lighting. This is an easy way to decrease energy use. Al Gore points out that,

“lighting accounts for one-fifth of all the electricity consumed in the United States” (306). Therefore, it is important that we replace old incandescent light bulbs with the highly efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs). While many people are switching over to CFLs, most homes still have the inefficient incandescent light bulbs. Only about 10% of the energy that incandescent bulbs use creates light, while the other 90% of the energy is lost as heat. Compact fluorescent lights, however, use 66% less energy and last ten times longer. “If every household in the United States substituted even one conventional light bulb with a CFL bulb, it would have the same effect on pollution levels as removing a million cars from the nation’s roads” (Gore 306-307).

Taking a million cars off of our roads is, unfortunately, unrealistic even if it would effectively reduce pollution levels. Luckily, there are other ways for us to individually lessen our car emissions. One option is to simply drive less. How many times do we hop in the car to visit a friend who lives just down the street? How many times do we drive to the neighborhood store just to pick up a few items? For about every mile that we drive, approximately one pound of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere (Delano 38). Walking, biking, and rollerblading to our destinations, whenever possible, are great ways to minimize our emissions and at the same time stay in shape. We can also consider the option of utilizing available public transportation, such as buses. By taking buses, more people can be transported in a single vehicle instead of everyone using their own exhaust-spewing cars to get from place to place. For many of us, driving a car is an absolute must, and so it would be wise to consider carpooling or buying a more fuel-efficient vehicle when the time comes to replace the old one. Not

only will the amount of pollution in the air be reduced, but money will be saved that would have otherwise gone toward gas.

In addition to cars, we must also be smart about how we use water, specifically hot water. A lot of energy goes into the process of heating water, and so it is critical that we use it wisely. When taking a shower, it would be beneficial for us to turn down the heat and attempt to bathe ourselves faster. Daydreaming in the shower and letting faucets run while brushing teeth and soaping up hands can cause valuable energy, water, and money to be wasted. Washing clothes in warm or cold water instead of hot can also help to save water and, therefore, energy. And when the time comes to buy new appliances, we should also look into purchasing more energy efficient showerheads, laundry machines, dish washers, and faucets. These efforts will help to minimize harmful emissions and to noticeably reduce water and energy bills (Gore 308-309).

Our emissions can further be reduced by lessening the amount of unnecessary and low-quality goods that we buy. In today's society, we all seem to want more stuff, even if we do not need it. We buy the newest, flashiest gadgets out there and then put them in the garage where they are forgotten. The problem is that it takes a lot of energy to manufacture and transport all of these nonessential objects, and this produces large amounts of gases. So, before purchasing an item on a whim, we should ask ourselves if we really need it and if we will use it often (Miller 384-385). In addition to buying too much stuff, we tend to purchase the cheapest products on the market, sacrificing quality in the process. Many low-quality products break fairly easily, meaning that we not only have to buy new ones, but we also increase the amount of waste entering landfills. By investing in more durable products, we can lower the emissions released from

manufacturers and landfills and at the same time save money that would have been spent on replacing the items.

Besides reducing our purchases, we can make an effort to reuse them. We are very much a throwaway society, tossing objects into the garbage without a second thought. It may be fast and easy, but it is also harmful to the environment, for decomposing garbage releases greenhouse gases into the air. By reusing items, we can prevent so much trash from entering landfills and, in turn, stop global warming from worsening. One way to do this is to use cloth bags instead of the plastic ones when shopping. Cloth bags are better for the Earth, can hold more items, and will stand up straighter in the car. Another option is to bring reusable lunchboxes, Tupperware, bottles, and eating utensils to work and school. This will require us to do some extra washing, but at the same time we will be doing the Earth a favor. We can also help our planet by thinking twice before throwing something away just because it breaks. See if the item can be repaired instead of immediately adding one more thing to the garbage dump. Glue toys back together, find replacement parts for bikes, and sew up holes in clothes. And if we no longer want something that is in good condition, we should stop ourselves from throwing it away and donate it to charity instead.

Recycling is also a very realistic solution to reducing our emissions. While it is true that “it does take energy to gather, haul, sort, clean, and reprocess...materials, recycling takes far less energy than does sending recyclables to landfills and creating new paper, bottles, and cans from raw materials” (Gore 315). So, the next time you are about to toss something in the trash, check to see if it can be recycled. If the object is made of paper, glass, plastic, or metal, chances are it is recyclable. By recycling, we can reduce

carbon dioxide emissions by about 1,000 pounds every year (Delano 38). So, if bringing reusable containers to work and school seems unrealistic for your lifestyle, consider using recyclable containers as an alternative. Paper bags, aluminum soda cans, and plastic utensils/beverage bottles can all be reprocessed into new products after we have used them.

Clearly, there are numerous ways for us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and prevent global warming from worsening. In fact, there are so many ways that it can be overwhelming. But we do not have to change our whole lifestyles or implement every single solution. Instead, we can be more aware of our actions and make little changes here and there until we are comfortable with our newly formed habits. Often, changing our behaviors can be the hardest thing for us to do, especially if we are already content with our current way of life. But, by making conscious efforts to become more environmentally responsible, we can all be successful in our attempts to make the world a better place. One person acting alone cannot impact global warming, but individuals acting together can make a huge difference. The Earth has a fever, and we have the medicine of our actions to keep that fever at bay.

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**Instructor's Comments (Mr. Pat Parks):** I thought this was an A paper for a number of reasons. It was clearly and carefully written, thoughtful in the development of its argument, agreeable in tone--not condescending or too elevated. Most importantly, though, the student knew her subject and that came across in the ease with which she was able to write about it. She wasn't just putting a bunch of stuff down and hoping it all fit together; she was in complete control of the subject matter and the paper from the first sentence. Lastly, I like it because she took an over-worked topic and made it feel fresh. That was due to her facility with language, along with all of the other stuff I mentioned.

## **Biology 101 Sample Essay**

Nutrition has played a big part in my life even prior to taking Biology 101. To say the least, I am fascinated by nutrition. I enjoy reading *Men's Health* magazine and watching television shows like "The Doctor's" and "Doctor Oz" because they are filled with nutrition tips and scientific studies that correlate to fitness and health. I constantly follow the latest nutritional news because I am a firm believer that your diet is the biggest component of your health and I wish to make most of my life. Biology 101 has been an extremely useful and knowledgeable course because I can personally relate to it and can apply much of the information learned to my own life. The Diet Analysis project was wonderful because it gave me a firsthand look at my own diet habits.

My actual intakes of the different food groups were somewhat near what the "My Pyramid" had recommended. I was within range for grains, fruits, and milk. My consumption of meat & beans and discretionary calories were 181% and 150% of my recommendation respectively. Vegetables, on the other hand, were severely low at only 35% of my recommended goal. It was evident from this basic food guide pyramid that I was over consuming meats/beans and discretionary calories and was under consuming vegetables. I definitely need to adjust my diet so that I will consume more vegetables and a slight increase in fruits. All together, I need to consume an extra 2.5 cups of vegetables daily, which I will do by eating salads, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, and corn. I also need a minor increase in fruits (~1 cup) which will be dealt with by eating an additional apple, orange or pear daily. I live the typical American diet, and I generally eat meat at every meal. One thing I will consider is eating smaller portions of meat and substituting the various vegetables that I mentioned above as an alternative. I also need

to cut back on discretionary calories such as peanut butter, cream cheese, and ice cream. I mainly consume discretionary calories because of their convenience, but I can easily substitute fruit for unhealthy snacks.

My intake recommendation of carbohydrates was slightly below the DRI recommendations. My DRI recommendation was between 1460 – 2108 kcalories and my actual consumption was 1210 kcalories. My daily consumption of fiber was drastically low at only 19 grams, or half of the 38 gram recommendation. Since I need to increase my consumption of both fiber and carbohydrates, it would be worthwhile for me to eat more fruit. I will eat about 60 grams of fruit a day. I will try to eat fruits that are high in fiber like apples and bananas. It would also be worthwhile for me to replace refined grains with whole grains. I will substitute whole grain or wheat bread for white bread on sandwiches. Not only are whole grains healthier, but they will also keep me satisfied for longer periods of time because they digest slower. I generally try to avoid high sugar foods, but I occasionally enjoy having a coke and some ice cream. However, these can also be substituted for orange juice with pulp and yogurt.

My consumption of fats represented 39% of my total food intake which is marginally higher than the recommended 20 – 35% of total fat calories. Fifteen percent of the total fat I consumed was saturated fat which is above the 10% recommendation. I completely avoid trans-fats, which are only supposed to make up less than a percent of the total fat consumption. I tend to eat a lot of dairy products and egg yolks, both of which are high in saturated fat. Other foods that are high in saturated fat are convenience foods like hot dogs and hamburgers that I eat at the ECC cafeteria. I've recently begun replacing those with grilled chicken sandwiches that are much lower in fat content.

Another thing that I can easily do to decrease my consumption of saturated fats is to choose dairy products with lower fat contents. I will opt for skim or 1% milk and 1% cottage cheese. Prior to taking this class, I learned about an interesting diet called the MUFA (Mono Unsaturated Fatty Acid) diet. I do not follow the diet religiously, but I try to include healthy linoleic linolenic acids into my diet from sources such as fish (salmon, tuna, tilapia), legumes (baked beans, peanuts, walnuts, almonds), avocados, and olive oil. I consume more omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids than recommended, but I have no intention of reducing my intake of these “healthy fats”.

I love protein from animal sources, and I usually eat meat, poultry, or seafood/fish at just about every meal. In parallel to what I’ve learned in class, proteins are the most satiating and tend to keep me feeling full for extended periods. I have a pretty high metabolism and tend to suffer from hypoglycemia if I don’t eat every three hours. Protein accounts for 21% of my total calories and is in perfect range of the DRI recommendation of 10 – 35%. The only problem is that a lot of the protein I consume is also high in fat and cholesterol, which is not good. As I already mentioned, I’ve begun replacing meat with poultry and am consuming less egg yolks. I’ve also discovered that unsalted peanuts are a good snack that help to keep my blood sugar level constant. Not to mention they are free of cholesterol and saturated fats.

My total calorie level of 3184 falls right in between my EER of 2950 calories and the DRI recommended 3244 calories. I am happy with my body weight and have maintained it for several months. I do not need to increase or decrease my calorie level. However, there are still some junk foods that I could get rid of in favor of nutrient dense and even functional foods. I need to focus most on vegetables more than anything.

Spinach, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, and broccoli are all vegetables that I seldom eat and need more of.

I currently get adequate physical activity, but I still would like to increase my activity level because of the additional health benefits to be had. During high school, I was extremely active as a tennis player and a runner. During running season, I ran 25 miles a week and was in the best shape of my life. After graduating high school, I attended Purdue University for a year, and in that time, my activity level basically dropped to zero. In that year, I managed to gain about 35 unwanted pounds which I attributed to lack of exercise, stress, all you can eat pre-paid meals for breakfast/lunch/dinner and the ingestion of a toxic liquid substance on Friday nights. Since then, I have altered my activity level. I currently belong to a fitness center where I do a mix of cardio and weight lifting exercises. I also hold a part-time job as a valet parking attendant where I am constantly on my feet and do a lot of sprinting. I would like to exercise even more, but I am too pressed for time; once summer comes around, that should change.

For the most part, I am receiving adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals. I was extremely surprised at how much sodium I was receiving though. My intake of 5714 mg of sodium is much higher than the DRI recommended 1500 to 2300 mg. One of the reasons I found this so ironic is that I never add salt to anything. In order to reduce my sodium levels, I will opt for “reduced sodium versions” and will try to avoid packaged and preserved food by buying fresh/natural foods instead. (I still can’t believe that 1.5 cups of 2% cottage cheese contains almost 1200 mg of sodium). The only vitamins which I obtained less than 100% of my DRI were Vitamin A and E. I will obtain

Vitamin A from sources such as carrots, mangoes, and spinach and will obtain vitamin E from sunflower seeds, almonds, and olives. The only minerals that were less than 100% of my DRI were magnesium and potassium. I will obtain magnesium from spinach, broccoli and almonds and will obtain potassium from bananas, avocados and cantaloupe.

The information I have received from this class is priceless. The Diet Analysis project has taught me a lot about my own eating habits and has inspired me to modify them for a healthier lifestyle. Probably the biggest change I will make after having done this project is to increase my intake of vegetables and fruits. Fruits and vegetables will provide more fiber in my diet (something I am lacking) as well as certain other vitamins and minerals that I am deficient in. I will also try to limit my fat intake, especially saturated fats from animal sources. I may even start packing my own lunches since most of the flaws in my diet are from convenience and fast foods.

**Instructor's Comments (Ms. Julie Opp):** The student received a 50/50 as he not only met all the criteria, but also demonstrated clear application of course content, including the Diet Analysis project, to his own personal diet, and he expressed an earnest willingness to make improvements. Background on the project: the students keep a 3 day food diary in the beginning of the semester, then throughout the semester, as various topics are covered in class, analyze their own diet using worksheets appropriate to the topic covered (i.e. carbohydrates, lipids, proteins, micronutrients...). The essay is a final essay reflecting on the outcome of these worksheets and how the student can/will improve their own personal nutrition. Submission of the entire Diet Analysis project, including the essay, are required to pass the class.

### Essay Exam Question from Psychology 100

**Question:** Who is your favorite psychologist? Write an essay about the psychologist from Chapter One whom you find the most interesting. Make sure to include answers to the following questions: Which school of thought does this psychologist belong to? What major studies or theories is he or she associated with? Why do you find this psychologist or his/her theories more compelling or interesting than others?

#### Response:

##### Essay Question #2

Having a favorite psychologist for me is a silly thing, for when I try to think about the psychologist that I like the most I can only remember the one I truly despise! Which would be Freud—I really don't like Freud and what he did as a man, including his outrageous assumptions that every unconscious conflict we experience is always motivated by something sexual or aggressive. **But**, I have to give him this—he paved the way for so many other psychologists to find their field of study, their perspective and specializations that exist today. He helped us learn and expand from his mistakes! And I really like that he developed psychoanalysis because I can see how the influence of our unconscious does play an important part on how we behave and our personality as well. This includes the theory that our childhood experiences have a lasting effect on our adult personality, because I can think back to my own childhood and see how it has shaped me into the person I am today. I think he is my favorite because I hate him so much. I mean, I really don't like the man because of the craziness that he believed, but I think that he had done something right, because of how psychology continued to expand after him.

**Instructor's Comments (Ms. Jessica Carpenter):** This essay has good organization, grammar and spelling. The reason it is exceptional is that the student has given herself permission to criticize aspects of psychology, instead of merely digesting them as is typical in the Psychology 100 course. She has clearly shown that she not only understands what Freud and psychoanalysis are about but that she has also thought it

through enough to effectively criticize (and praise) it. This puts the essay very high on Bloom's taxonomy- she is not just reciting facts.

## SECTION IV: THE RESEARCH PAPER

Many courses require research papers or lengthy reports to encourage individual study and research and to provide practice in writing. Despite the length, it is best to approach this type of assignment just as you would any other: it is a *process*. Keep in mind that the main objective of English 102 is to prepare you for exactly this kind of assignment, another reason to take it as early in your college education as possible. Also, what follows is a very brief summary of this process; entire books have been written about it, and you would be wise to purchase some kind of text about writing college research papers to assist you throughout your education. Many faculty in the English department use James Lester's *Writing Research Papers* or *The MLA Handbook*, but there are several other books which can provide this kind of assistance. This resource is as important as a dictionary, and you should have one throughout your college years and beyond. Finally, consult the library section under "Support for Effective Writing" (pp. 58- 61) for additional suggestions about more effective research strategies.

A research paper is primarily a record of intelligent reading in several sources on a particular subject. The challenge of writing such a paper will not be as overwhelming as it may initially seem if you plan it out in advance and understand, again, that there is a process to follow. Trying to write a research paper the day or two before it is due is as close to academic suicide as you can get. Don't put yourself in a situation where you find out what those consequences are.

The process for writing a research paper consists of the following seven steps although you may find that, at times, you do not proceed in a straightforward, linear manner. The first three steps will come before the last four, but you will find that the last four often occur in a cyclical fashion:

1. Choosing a Subject
2. Identifying Sources and Materials
3. Taking Notes
4. Outlining the Paper
5. Writing the First Draft
6. Revising and Editing the Paper
7. Polishing the Essay for Submission

Let's look at each of these steps independently. Remember to use the "Worksheet to Avoid Procrastination" on pp. 24-25 to help you.

### CHOOSING A SUBJECT

Sometimes, depending on the class you are taking, you will be given a very specific topic about which you must write. At other times, you will be given a general subject (e.g., "Write about a meaningful event during the Civil War"), and it is up to you to determine a specific topic from that general subject. At still other times, you may be given almost complete latitude with topic selection; this is often the case in the English

department where faculty are more concerned with the process you follow in writing the paper and less about the specific topic you have selected. Regardless of the specific conditions under which you are writing, bring your own interests to bear on your topic selection as much as possible; your direct interest in the topic will make the project, which may take several weeks to complete, much easier to endure and more rewarding (in terms of a grade) in the long run. For example, the Civil War subject can be taken in many directions: economic, political, sociological, literary. You will write best when you choose an aspect of that subject which *you* find appealing. When in doubt, run your topic idea past your instructor (in fact, he or she may require you to submit a topic proposal anyway) to see if you are on track. It is much better to find out now, at this early stage, than three weeks into the project.

A warning: the most common mistake made by students in choosing a topic for a research paper is selecting one that is too general. A topic must be very specific to be adequately handled in anything short of a book. Believe it or not, 10-12 pages is really *not* that much space, so choosing a narrow enough subject will assure that you give it sufficient depth. The reference librarians, in addition to your instructor, can be valuable assets as you work to narrow your topic. Their job is to help students with exactly this kind of task, so take full advantage of them!

### **IDENTIFYING SOURCES AND MATERIALS**

The main thing to keep in mind at this stage of your project is to be sure you are identifying legitimate sources. That is to say, be sure you are looking in the right place for source material. All too often, students will spend a few minutes looking for something (in the wrong place) and return to say, “There are no sources in our library on my topic.” In fact, this is rarely the case and, when it is, often you can order sources through interlibrary loan, which is a system through which academic libraries lend materials to one another. Use your common sense to determine where to look. For example, if you are writing a research paper on charter schools, it makes sense to look for that information in various education databases; simply using a search engine such as Google will garner you many more references than you can possibly read or use and, ultimately, wastes your time.

Your initial goal is to develop a working list of 10-12 sources which you think might be useful; keep in mind that you may not use all of them, but it’s a good starting point. These sources should be varied—that is, you should have a balance of books, journal articles, internet sources, and maybe even some field research (such as interviews or surveys—though this depends on the topic and the instructor). Though electronic sources are certainly easier to access than “traditional” ones, faculty often discourage students’ reliance on them. Surely much that is available on the internet has value, but not all of it. You should learn to be cautious and skeptical about these sources. One trick is to pay attention to the tag line—the letters that follow the “.” A .com site, for example, is a commercial one whereas an .edu site is educational in nature and a .gov site is one hosted by the government. Though not all .com sites are “bad,” they are typically trying to sell something, so the motivation behind them is different. Paying attention to these

tag lines is an important first step in determining the credibility of your sources. In addition, the college's library website ([www.library.elgin.edu](http://www.library.elgin.edu)) has some information that will help you evaluate the websites you have located as potential sources.

### TAKING NOTES

Once you have a set of sources, you need to start reading them and taking notes. Simply assemble them in some kind of logical order, and start “plugging away.” Of course, you do not want to begin on page one of a 300 page book and start taking notes; you will waste a great deal of effort that way. Instead, take notes based on your preliminary thesis, paying attention to ideas or concepts that not only support your position (if your paper is arguable in nature rather than informational) but offer other perspectives as well. It is often important to demonstrate to readers that you have not ignored the other side of your issue.

As you take notes on these sources, you have a variety of options. Of course, the easiest route is to just copy the information down directly, creating a direct quote. Be very cautious about this and try to resist the temptation as much as possible. Though direct quotes can add an important dimension to your paper by establishing credibility, they can also clutter your paper. When you quote too much, you are actually detracting from your effectiveness as a writer because readers are so busy trying to make sense of what all the “experts” are saying that they lose track of you, the writer. A good rule of thumb here is to allow direct quotes to account for no more than 15-20% of your final paper. Above all else, remember to give credit to the source of each quote; if you do not, it is considered plagiarism, a very serious academic offense (see separate section on Avoiding Plagiarism, pp. 28-30).

In addition to direct quotes, there are other ways to incorporate source material into your paper; the two most common are summary and paraphrase. With both of these options, you will need to give credit to the sources from which you took the information because it is not only the actual words that originate with those sources but the *ideas* as well. So, even when you write using your own words, as you would do with both summary and paraphrase, you must document accurately. Summary and paraphrase should account for no more than 50% of your paper. Therefore, when combined with direct quotes, about 65-70% of your paper will come from sources, leaving the remaining 30-35% to come from you—making connections, drawing parallels, offering insights, etc. Most students overlook this element and devote far too much space to their sources; remember that *you* are the guiding force here, and your presence as a writer should be evident throughout your paper. Your sources are certainly important, but they are there *for support*.

Most writing teachers suggest taking notes on note cards. Though college students often see this method as too much like high school, it actually will help you with the next stage of the process: organization. Note cards are easily moved and re-arranged; in addition, they force you to be concise because of their size. A few suggestions to make taking notes easier:

1. Be sure to put a title on the top of each card. Simply repeating your topic on 50 cards is not going to help, but a title such as “Important Dates” will tell you right away the contents of that card. Again, these cards are intended to facilitate the next stage.
2. Identify the source for the card. Be sure you know where this information is coming from and the page number(s) on which it was found; this will save you time in the long run.
3. Be sure you have some “personal” cards as well. These notes reflect your opinions and thoughts as you make your way through the process and will make the writing process, when you get there, much easier.

### **OUTLINING THE PAPER**

It used to be that, when planning any type of paper, students were told they must create an outline first. Those students whose brains functioned in this way were perfectly delighted while others who found outlines too restrictive often wrote them after the paper was due just because they were required. This seems a bit counter-productive and illogical. For writing teachers then, those days are (mostly) gone. Today we recognize that students may organize their essays through a number of methods; writing an outline is only one of them. However, because of the scope of the research paper (as opposed to other types of essay), writing an outline becomes essential. So, even if you are not an “outline person,” do yourself a favor and create one before writing the first draft. This will allow you to write your research paper in sections; it also will give you a clear, visual indication of whether or not you have adequately developed your topic. Though you do not necessarily need the same number of subpoints within each section of your paper, you also want to be sure your treatment is as balanced as possible.

This outline stage also enables you to avoid another common problem: rushing into writing. Take some time to reconsider your topic, purpose, and the research you have compiled. An outline is a guide to help you write the paper, so be flexible and realize that it can change. But it is a great starting point.

To start writing your outline, here are some steps to follow:

1. Review your notes to find the main subdivisions of your topic. Sort these cards into natural groups (see why note cards are so important?). Name these groups, and use the names for the main divisions in your outline.
2. Within each main division, sort the cards again to identify the subsections for your outline.
3. At this point, your work should begin to look more coherent and to take on some structure. If it does not, try going back and sorting again to see if

another general pattern is possible. Remember, there is never only one way to do something in writing.

4. Using a traditional outline form is helpful to see whether you have created the balance noted above:

- I.
  - A.
    1.
      - a.
      - b.
    - 2.
  - B.
- II.

Remember to use these labels only in the outline and not in your actual paper. Otherwise, it will look more like an extended outline than a paper.

### **WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT**

Just start writing. If you think about it too long, you're going to feel overwhelmed. So just start writing. But plan to write the paper in "chunks." Rarely does anyone have the energy to write ten pages in one sitting, but writing two or three does not sound that bad. This is where your outline comes in; start by writing one section at a time. Of course, this may take several days, which is another reason to avoid procrastinating.

As you write, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Be sure your thesis is clear in your introduction.
2. Don't worry too much about grammar and mechanics *now*; your goal is to write freely and concentrate on how you can best express your ideas to your readers.
3. Focus on unity and coherence. Keep things together that make sense together. Your outline will help with this. Be sure not to change your subject in the middle of a paragraph, and be sure that everything under one heading in your outline is about the same general topic.
4. Incorporate effective source material for support and document as you go. This is much easier than scrambling at the last minute to relocate sources.
5. Avoid short, choppy sentences as well as long, convoluted ones with more than one idea.

6. If you have not already, now is the time to start thinking about a title.

### **REVISING AND EDITING THE PAPER**

If you have planned your work carefully and followed the suggestions above, you should be left with at least a few days to revise your paper; this is an essential step to the process, so do not mistakenly overlook it. Most of the suggestions made earlier in the “Revising” section apply here as well (see pp. 9-10). Some particular things to keep in mind when revising a research paper:

1. Try to set your paper aside for a day or so and return to it with a fresh eye. Do you prove your point? Is your argument effective? Have you supported your ideas convincingly? Are there other points you could/should make?
2. Check for proper documentation form. Though there is not enough space to cover this fully here, you must document properly. Chances are that your instructor has already told you which documentation system to use; unfortunately, there is no universal one, so as a college student, you have to be flexible and understand that various disciplines prefer different systems. Most liberal arts disciplines, for example, encourage the use of MLA (Modern Language Association) while many social science disciplines prefer APA (American Psychological Association). There are several other methods, but these are the two most common. When in doubt, always ask your instructor which system you should use. There are many websites that will assist you with this. One of the most common is Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL); the web address is [www.owl.english.purdue.edu](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu), and its resources and handouts have proven tremendously valuable for students. ECC’s library homepage ([www.library.elgin.edu](http://www.library.elgin.edu)) also provides documentation resources, including NoodleTools, which is a bibliography creation software to which ECC subscribes.
3. Be sure you have been cautious about using too many quotations. Remember the 15-20% rule. If you think you have too many quotes, “convert” some of them to paraphrases, but remember you must still document accurately.
4. Read the paper aloud to see if it “flows.” Also be sure to have someone read your paper to you. These are *not* the same.
5. Check for proper spelling and punctuation.

### **POLISHING THE PAPER FOR SUBMISSION**

Surely the content of your report is more important than the format, but an attractive appearance can go a long way to assure a favorable reception. The following guidelines should assist you as you assemble your final paper for submission; use these unless your instructor provides different directions:

1. The paper should be typed on standard paper and stapled or paper clipped (check which your instructor prefers) in the upper left corner. **DO NOT FOLD.** Longer papers of ten or more pages should be in a folder or cover of some sort.
2. Use one side of the paper only, double space, and incorporate adequate margins (usually 1" all around)
3. Include the following items in this order:
  - Cover sheet (title of paper, name of author, course number and name, instructor, date). Any research manual will have models for you to follow.
  - Text of paper, with the title repeated at the top of the first page. Beginning with page 2, pages should be numbered in the upper right-hand corner.
  - Any appendices (charts, maps, tables, etc) that do not fit into the main text (you may not have occasion to include these, but if you do, here's where they would go).
  - Works Cited (MLA) or References (APA) page. This is an alphabetical listing of all the sources used in your paper. Remember that you may have an instructor who prefers a different system of documentation, so check first. Use any standard research manual to help you since there are too many variations to discuss here. Basically, all citations include authors, titles, and publication source, but the order of that information may vary slightly from one system to the next. Most instructors do not expect you to memorize this information, but they do expect you document correctly; essentially, that means becoming one with a research manual and using it properly.
4. Proofread your paper very carefully. Any minor corrections should be made neatly in black ink but only if you detect them at the last minute; otherwise, you should make them on the computer and reprint the page(s).
5. Before you turn in the essay to your instructor, make a copy of the paper for yourself (or be sure you have a copy on a jump or hard drive). Occasionally papers do get lost, so making a copy is insurance that you will get credit for your hard work.

## SECTION V: PREPARING FOR AND TAKING ESSAY EXAMS

Throughout your education, you will encounter primarily two types of exams: objective tests and essay tests (or you may have tests that combine the two). Objective tests usually ask for specific pieces of information, and if you know these “facts,” you will likely do well. However, if you have studied different information, you may do poorly even if you possess vast knowledge of the subject. Essay exams, in contrast, give you an opportunity to use the answers to show what you actually know. As a result, you can prepare for an essay exam knowing that the questions will allow you to write about what you have studied.

Essay exam situations can be nerve-racking for students, but below are some “tried and true” methods that will foster your success:

1. Pay careful attention to the time. For example, if you have six questions to answer in 75 minutes, allow yourself ten minutes for each. When the time is up for one question, stop writing and begin the next one. There will be about 15 minutes at the end to finish the incomplete answers. Six incomplete answers will usually receive more credit than four complete ones.
2. Read through the entire exam through first—before you start. Know what you are facing. Be sure all directions are clear to you. Sometimes, for example, you may be given a choice of questions to which to respond (for example: “Choose three of the following five”). If you don’t catch this, you will waste valuable time responding to five questions when your instructor expected you to respond only to three.
3. Start with the question you know best. There is no rule that says you should start with the first question. No one ever said you have to answer the first question first, yet many students feel *compelled* to do this! Starting with the question you know best will reduce your nervousness and anxiety; your confidence will also improve, making it more probable that you will do well with the remainder of the exam.
4. Use your common sense. Generally speaking, a 30-point question requires you to write about three times more than a ten-point question. This is how your instructor thinks anyway, and so should you.
5. Pay attention to key words in the question. Words such as *explain* and *identify* differ from words like *argue* and *compare and contrast*. These words tell you exactly what your instructor is expecting in your response, so be sure to develop your responses accordingly. Students who do poorly on essay exams often understand the content but *misunderstand* what they are being asked; sometimes underlining those key words can help keep you on track.

6. Take a few minutes to outline your responses. This planning time is essential to a well-organized response. To begin writing in the hope that the right answer will eventually turn up wastes precious time and is usually futile.
7. Include as much specific detail as you can. You need to talk the talk here. Use key phrases from readings, refer to specific lectures, incorporate the terminology of the discipline—do whatever will convince your instructor that you know the material.
8. Be sure to include an introduction and a conclusion. All too often, instructors are inundated with single-paragraph essay responses that go on for pages. At a minimum, an essay response should include three paragraphs: one each for the introduction, body, and conclusion. Of course, some responses will be longer than others, and so you may have several body paragraphs. This “complete package” will be satisfying to the reader, your instructor.
9. If you run out of time, at least jot down a few ideas or a brief outline for any questions that remain unanswered. This is far better than leaving them blank, which you should NEVER do.
10. Take a few minutes to read over what you have written. Though most instructors are more lenient when it comes to errors in essay exams as opposed to formal papers, you should not hesitate to correct any obvious mistakes you detect; these may include: misspelled words, omitted words, transposed numbers (1963 for 1693, for example), and incomplete sentences. Most faculty would prefer correct responses that may not be perfectly neat over clean responses that are riddled with errors.

## SECTION VI: SUPPORT FOR EFFECTIVE WRITING

A common misperception exists among college students when it comes to writing, and that is that writing is (and should be) a solitary activity. Most writing teachers value collaborative learning and incorporate it into their classes. Certainly, at some point, writing *must* be a solitary activity; after all, you are the one who needs to sit down in front of your computer or with a blank pad of paper and a pen and start writing. But it need not stay that way from beginning to end. Professional writers often share their writing with others; you should too. Anyone is a potential resource; read your writing to anyone who will listen to it and ask for feedback. Establish informal peer editing groups with students in your classes and share your drafts with one another. Take your essay to your instructor and ask for some constructive criticism. All of these will help you to become a more effective writer. There are some additional resources to which you may turn for guidance; each is described below.

### THE WRITE PLACE

The following information is provided by Dr. Johanna Cummings, current director of the Write Place:

The Write Place is an on-campus writing lab designed to assist all students with writing assignments from any class. Consultants in the lab, many of whom are English faculty, are available to assist students in any of the following areas: critical thinking, thesis development, organization, paragraph development, formatting papers, documentation style, speech outlines, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. Inside the lab, there are computers, a printer, and various writing handbooks available for use.

Though consultants are trained to work with students at any stage of the writing process, sessions will be most effective by following these suggestions:

1. Determine what kind of help is needed. Saying “I have a history paper to write, and I need help” is not as effective as saying “I really need help focusing my thesis in my history paper. I’m writing about the influence of Martin Luther King on the Civil Rights Movement.” With the second example, a consultant will be in a much better position to provide assistance.
2. Come with supporting materials. These may include a course syllabus, an assignment description, and any necessary textbooks. Remember, the consultants can help with writing, but they are not experts in all the various content areas that exist on campus.
3. Avoid the last minute rush. Procrastination comes with serious negative consequences. Effective writing takes time, and if you feel like you need assistance from The Write Place, it will take even longer. Coming in several days before your paper is due or even in the planning stages is a good idea.

4. Remember that tutoring is designed to guide and assist, not to complete the work for the student.
5. The Write Place is not an editing facility. Tutors will help students identify patterns of errors through guided practice. Guided practice may include reading the document aloud, looking for particular errors as directed by an instructor, or reviewing a particular page for general errors. However, the tutor WILL NOT edit the paper for the student.
6. The Write Place will not grade a student's paper or offer an evaluative judgment on what a grade should be. Only the instructor of the course can grade a student's work, so tutors encourage students to understand the requirements of each assignment.

Though the hours may vary slightly from semester to semester, generally the lab is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. and 4:00-7:00 p.m. and on Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

### **ECC LIBRARY**

The following questions are ones students frequently ask about ECC's Library. The responses are provided by ECC's reference librarians:

**Q: How can the ECC Library help me?**

**A:**

- The ECC Library is an academic library, ideally suited to your need for college level materials and research assistance.
- The library collects materials, like college-level books and periodical articles that support college classes and assignments.
- You will find that the instructors who assign your research paper or other writing project expect you to use these college-level materials.
- The ECC librarians are college faculty, who teach classes in the use and evaluation of all types of information, as well as assisting students with research help. They are familiar with the classes and assignments at ECC, and most of all, they want to help you to be successful!

**Q: How do I access the library's resources?**

**A:**

**You can access the library's resources both in person and online. Go to <http://library.elgin.edu> to:**

- Look up books in the library
- Find articles, book chapters, encyclopedia articles, and other information using library databases
- Use research guides developed for specific class assignments

- IM a librarian

(To check out books or to use the library's databases from home, you'll need to get a library card and sign in from off-campus first. For more information about library cards, contact the library's Circulation Desk at 847-214-7337 or [circdesk@elgin.edu](mailto:circdesk@elgin.edu) )

**Come into the library to:**

- Get research help from a librarian in person
- Check out books, dvds or cds
- Use library computers
- Make copies

**Q: How do I get help from a reference librarian?**

**A:**

- Text or IM a librarian at [libref@elgin.edu](mailto:libref@elgin.edu)
- Call us at 847-214-7354
- Drop in for in-person help, or set up a research appointment for one on one attention.

Despite all these advantages, there are some things to keep in mind:

1. You are responsible for proofreading your own writing. The librarians do not help with this.
2. The library staff does not have access to word processing software other than Microsoft Word, so they cannot help you retrieve documents if they are not saved as either Word files (.doc) or rich text format files (.rtf). Many students actually think they are using Word at home when in fact they are using Microsoft Works. Check into this before you become overly frustrated because you cannot access a file on campus.

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

Over the last ten years or so, the internet has made writing and researching much easier for students. Certainly the actual writing remains your responsibility, but the ease with which you can gain access to materials has become much easier in the last few years. Below is a categorized list of these resources.

- Search engines: These include Google, AltaVista, and Yahoo. Also check out the guides developed by the library to help you evaluate web pages (found on the library's website); not everything on the web is equally valuable, and the suggestions made are critical to assure yourself that you are using legitimate sources.

- General writing assistance:
  1. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab ([www.owl.english.purdue.edu](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu)) includes a wide array of resources regarding all aspects of writing: organization, drafting, grammar and mechanics, documentation. There are also several handouts that you can print out for future reference. This is the one many writing teachers use in their classes.
  2. The Nuts and Bolts Guide to Writing ([www.nutsandboltsguide.com](http://www.nutsandboltsguide.com)) provides straightforward, practical advice about most aspects of writing.
  3. Elements of Style by William Strunk Jr. (an online version of the classic book; web address is [www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/)).
- Documentation: A number of resources are available here, including the library's website, which has links to several styles as well as access to NoodleTools (which will help you generate citations). Other resources include, again, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab ([www.owl.english.purdue.edu](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu)), Citation Styles Online ([www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html](http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html)), the Modern Language Association ([www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)), and the American Psychological Association ([www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)).
- Grammar and mechanics:
  1. Purdue's OWL (address above) is a great resource; it includes several handouts to print as well as Powerpoint presentations to view.
  2. Guide to Grammar and Writing ([www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/](http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/)) includes a number of resources, including interactive quizzes and information pertaining specifically to English as a Second Language (ESL) students.