



Tutor Handbook Fall 2009

Dear Writing Center Tutors,

Welcome to the 2009-2010 school year and to an exciting new year at the Writing Center. You play an important role at the college in helping your classmates achieve success in all of their courses. Please know that the work you do is appreciated and recognized across Albright's campus.

I hope this handbook, and the work we do this year, will help us to achieve these goals:

- ❖ Maintain a positive environment for tutors and writers
- ❖ Learn new tutoring techniques that help writers gain confidence and learn new strategies
- ❖ Use varied and versatile tutoring techniques
- ❖ Use an appointment based scheduling system to complement our walk-in hours, and strengthen our e-tutoring services for students at branch and evening programs
- ❖ Participate in evening workshops in alliance with the Academic Learning Center
- ❖ Positively promote the center and help the campus community gain a stronger understanding of what we do

As the year progresses, please communicate with me about any ideas or challenges you may have. I encourage you to ask questions, and I value your support in creating a dynamic, evolving writing center.

Thank you for all that you do,
Rachel Liberatore

Writing Center Coordinator

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WRITING CENTER INFORMATION

Hours of Operation: Sun. through Thurs. 3pm-9pm.
Closed during meetings or trainings.

Location: Mathematics and Computing Building, First Floor, #105

E-mail: Writingcenter@alb.edu

Writing Center Phone Number: (610) 921-7540
(from campus: X7540)

Web: www.albright.edu/academics/wcwelcome.html

COORDINATOR

Rachel Liberatore

E-mail: RLiberatore@alb.edu

Office: Computing and Mathematics, #103

Office Phone: (610) 921-7854

(from campus: X7854)

Emergency home phone: on contact information list sheet given to tutors and hanging in the center

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

College Security—Public Safety: (610) 921-7670
(from campus X7670)

You can also dial 911 from a campus phone

SERVICES WE PROVIDE

INDIVIDUAL TUTORING

Most of our work involves assisting writers one-on-one with all stages of the writing process. For instance, you may help a writer brainstorm ideas, create an outline for a paper, strengthen a thesis, develop arguments, integrate research, or focus on a grammar skill.



CLASS VISITS

We provide short visits to writing-intensive courses to increase awareness of the center's methods and goals.

WORKSHOPS

In coordination with the Academic Learning Center, we help lead evening workshops on writing skills. You may be invited to help create, plan or lead one of these workshops.

TUTORING ONLINE



We provide e-mail based feedback to writers in evening/branch programs (the Accelerated Degree Programs including the

DCP (Degree Completion Program) and DSP (Degree Start Program). Please use the center's "E-Tutoring Guide" (a brief booklet of tips on successful e-tutoring strategies with sample responses to writers) if the coordinator asks you to help with e-tutoring. General/day students will need to visit our center in person.

SHIFT POLICIES

WORKING WITH OTHER TUTORS

This job requires thoughtful communication skills and the ability to show consideration towards other tutors. For instance, many writers visit the center as "drop-ins" (without an appointment), and so the two tutors working a shift will need to take turns helping writers who visit.

Since your fellow tutors and writers are depending on you, working all of your shifts is important. If you are not able to make your shift, please use the "Contact Information for Writing Center Tutors" form to find a substitute, and inform your shiftmate and coordinator about the change.

If you feel another tutor is not meeting professional expectations, please discuss the situation with the coordinator. My goal is to work with you to create a pleasant and effective environment.

SESSION LENGTH AND BREAKS

We tutor for 30-minute sessions. If other writers are not waiting, you can tutor the same writer for up to 60 minutes (one hour). After an hour, ask the writer to continue practicing the skill focused on during the session, and invite them to return to the Writing Center the next day or later in the week.

In addition, if the center is busy and you are tutoring back-to-back sessions, make sure you are able to take at least a 5-minute break per hour to ensure you are able to focus well on your sessions. If needed, excuse yourself to the restroom or water fountain to give yourself a short break.

OPENING THE CENTER

The center should be unlocked by 3:00pm, but if it is not, please ask the coordinator or college Public Safety to unlock the center. If needed, turn on the computer or adjust the heating/cooling and check that all needed supplies are available. If any supplies look low, please inform the coordinator. Finally, check your schedule of appointments and be ready for some great tutoring!

APPOINTMENTS VS. DROP-INS

You will want to follow your appointment schedule but also welcome students who drop by without an appointment. Since the center is moving from almost all drop-ins to holding appointments, many students may not know about the appointment option. Please give drop-in students a “How to Make an Appointment” sheet at the end of your session with them. In addition, please help drop-in students make appointments or add themselves to the appointment schedule.

STAYING LATE AND CLOSING

Staying late at the Writing Center is strongly discouraged—your homework, sleep and personal life are important too! If writers arrive after 8:30pm, it is very appropriate to inform them that you would be glad to help them, but that you do need to close the center at 9:00pm. If a unique situation requires you to stay late, put the extra time on your timesheet and discuss the situation with the coordinator. Please lock the door and turn off the lights if you are the last to leave.

WHEN THERE IS A LINE...

As we move towards using appointment software, there should be fewer instances of long lines. If there is a line of students waiting, please give them a “How to Make an Appointment” handout so they can make an

appointment for later that evening. If students are waiting in case an appointment is a “no-show,” please inform those waiting that you will work with them as soon as possible. You may need to limit session time length to 30 minutes or create a special appointment sheet just for that evening. Inform the coordinator of any ongoing scheduling problems.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Please respect the confidentiality of all who visit the center. The fact that a particular person visited the Writing Center, and the content of papers and discussions, should be kept private. However, without naming specific names, it is appropriate to discuss tutoring sessions at staff meetings to help us learn more about tutoring strategies. If you have an unusual or difficult session, please discuss it with the coordinator.

CELL PHONES, E-MAIL, ETC.



During work shifts, make sure your use of cell phones, e-mail, etc., does not interfere with providing prompt, enthusiastic and undivided attention to writers who visit the center.

ABSENCES

If you are scheduled to work, you are expected to show up for your shift and work the entire duration of that shift. If you know ahead of time that you must miss a shift, find a substitute by using the “Contact Information for Writing Center Tutors” sheet (given to you at an early meeting and posted in the Writing Center). It is also okay for tutors to switch shifts, but inform the coordinator. In the case of an emergency, please contact the Writing Center Coordinator, Rachel Liberatore at her office phone (610) 921-7854 or RLiberatore@alb.edu and let your shiftmate know you will be absent.

PARTS OF A TUTORING SESSION

GREETING AND SETTING THE STAGE

What do you do when a writer enters the Writing Center?



Your greeting should welcome the writer, allow for introductions, and review the format of the session—let the writer know how much time is available and what to expect.

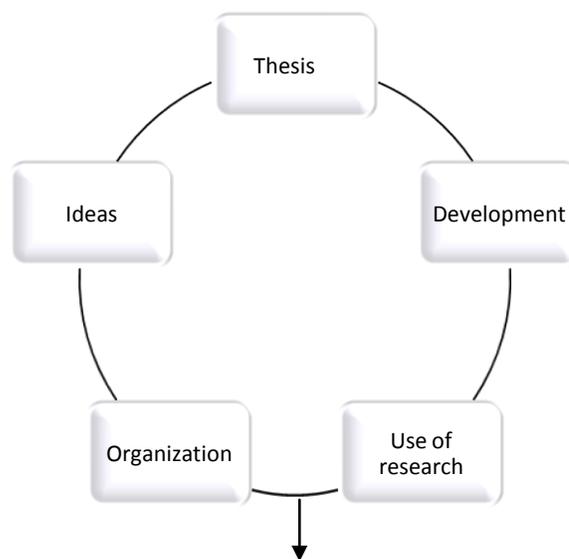
SELECTING A FOCUS FOR THE SESSION

To help determine a session's focus, involve the writer!

1. Review the assignment sheet guidelines and additional information provided by the professor.
2. Ask the writer what areas of writing they would like to focus on for the session.
3. Ask the writer to share their paper's main focus or thesis and major points; read the introduction, topic sentences and conclusion together and skim the paper.

After reviewing the assignment sheet, writer's preferences and an overview of the paper, agree together on the area of writing you will focus on and the method you will use. Start with major issues first:

Start with the Global—
issues that affect the paper as a whole



Move to the Local—
issues that affect smaller parts.

After the ideas, development and organization are solid, add the finishing touches:



- Sentence structure
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Word choice
- Etc.

LEADING THE SESSION

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Generally the student should be “holding the pencil” and doing much of the talking through ideas ... but you also want to be versatile

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LET THE WRITER TAKE OWNERSHIP

Let the writer retain “ownership” of their paper and the writing process. They should mark on their own paper and you should use open-ended questions to guide them towards using their own ideas. However, sometimes it will make sense for you to hold the pencil—perhaps taking notes while the writer talks through ideas—or to directly instruct the writer in a skill before allowing the writer to practice. Be versatile!

BE VERSATILE

Be versatile in your tutoring! The method you use will depend on the session’s goals and what works with a particular writer. For example:

- ❖ To develop a thesis, you may ask open-ended questions and take notes while a writer talks.
- ❖ To review a paper’s organization, you may have a writer share each paragraph’s main point while one of you jots down keywords to create a “post-draft outline.”
- ❖ To develop/add ideas, you may have a writer read one paragraph at a time while the two of you discuss what

readers of the paper might still wonder.

- ❖ To practice a grammar skill, you might use the first paragraph of the essay and a grammar guide to show the writer how to improve on a particular skill, and then have the writer try it with the second paragraph before you give feedback.

..... and many other possibilities !

BRAINSTORMING IDEAS / PREWRITING

A tutoring session focused on brainstorming ideas and paper topics could involve strategies like...

- ❖ Writer freewriting, then the writer and tutor discussing which ideas from the freewriting could lead to a paper topic
- ❖ Collaborating to create a list, chart or outline of potential ideas
- ❖ What else?

STRENGTHENING CONTENT



A session focused on developing ideas/content could involve strategies like...

- ❖ Writer reading selected parts of the paper out-loud—or writer and tutor reading selected parts silently— and then discussing idea development
- ❖ Tutor providing open-ended questions to help the writer add or change ideas
- ❖ Integrating more from research or adding more discussion of research
- ❖ Alternating between brainstorming/prewriting and drafting
- ❖ What else?

ORGANIZING THE IDEAS

A session focused on organizing ideas could involve strategies like...

- ❖ Creating a formal or informal outline before a paper is drafted
- ❖ Numbering or color-coding parts of a brainstorming list/chart
- ❖ Creating a “post-draft outline” (outlining what is actually in a drafted essay after the essay is written, to help see the actual organization of the paper) and then making changes as needed
- ❖ Using different colored highlighters or post-its to help categorize ideas
- ❖ What else?

USE OF RESEARCH

It is important to help writers integrate research in appropriate ways. Use our writing handbooks and handouts for examples of paraphrasing, integrating quotations, citation, MLA/APA, etc.



If you think a writer has crossed the line into possibly “plagiarizing” a paper, recognize that they may just need instruction on how to use research more effectively or on college-level expectations for paraphrasing, quoting and citation. Have a discussion about their methods of using research and show them examples of what is generally considered appropriate and inappropriate.

It is appropriate to help writers use the library webpage/databases or internet to find research sources, but remind the writer that they could also work with expert reference librarians at the main library to find focused and scholarly research sources.

EDITING/GRAMMAR SESSIONS

An editing/grammar session should still focus on particular skills. First focus on the areas of grammar that would most affect a reader’s understanding of the paper. Then focus on one or two areas of grammar where you notice a repeated need for changes.

Techniques could include

- ❖ Guiding a writer in using a grammar book or the internet to study and change a particular area of grammar
- ❖ Showing the writer a strategy to make a change the first few times it is needed, then asking the writer to do the next few on their own before providing feedback.
- ❖ Using statements that guide but also help the writer become more independent. For example,
 - “This sentence needs an apostrophe—where do you think it might go?”
 - “This paragraph has one run-one sentence. See if you can find it..... what approach might you take to change it?”

Remember—when in doubt, use the grammar guides together! This helps you learn more grammar and teaches the writer how to find the information on their own.

CLOSING THE SESSION



It is important that writers recognize what they learned from the session.

New this year: for the last few minutes of the session, talk through the “What We Practiced” form. This helps you and the writer review the content of the session and is something the writer could share with their professor.

See the sample “What We Practiced” forms at the end of this packet.

To finish with record-keeping, make sure you fill out the session report form for center record keeping and statistics.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

During the session, ask open-ended questions (questions that require a detailed response and can be answered many different ways)

In starting a session you might say...

- ❖ “What qualities does the teacher want the paper to have?”
- ❖ “What would you like us to focus on in this session?”

During the session try to make your questions specific to the content of the particular paper. Open-ended questions could begin...

- ❖ “Explain a bit more about this idea regarding...”
- ❖ “Why....?”
- ❖ “What else....?”

CONSIDER POSSIBLE READER RESPONSE

Discussing how readers of a paper might react can provide idea for change without making value judgments. Rather than speaking in terms of right/wrong, or good writing/bad writing, or “fixing errors,” explain how audiences might react to the paper. It can also be helpful to talk about your own reaction using “I-statements.” You might say things like...

- ❖ “When I read this, it makes me wonder.....Would you like to address that in your paper?”
- ❖ “I’ve found that many professors want writers to..... Do you want to try that approach?”
- ❖ “Some people reading your paper might be confused/offended by.....What could you do instead?”

PHRASE SUGGESTIONS AS POSSIBILITIES

When giving suggestions, phrase your suggestions as possibilities so that writers can retain “ownership” of their essays by deciding whether or not to make changes:

- ❖ “You might...” “You could...”
- ❖ “One strategy would be to...another would be to...would you like to try one of these?”
- ❖ “I see at least two things you could do here. You could.... Or....”
- ❖ “How about [Word A] or [Word B]?”

HOLDING BACK

An important point of communication can also be silence. Sometimes it is important to give a writer a few minutes to think about an idea or a phrasing—you may need to resist the temptation to jump in and provide an answer. It is also important to resist giving your personal opinion about a controversial issue discussed in the paper. You could instead discuss how different readers of the paper might react.

BODY LANGUAGE AND VOICE

Consider your body language and voice as you communicate with writers. Consider whether smiling, nodding, looking at a writer or their paper, etc., could show interest or increase a writer’s comfort level. Similarly, your tone of voice can affect whether you seem involved in the tutoring process.

WORKING WITH ESL WRITERS

If a writer is learning English as a Second Language, just use your best tutoring techniques! Creativity can aid in communication and many principles of effective tutoring still apply. Here are some strategies that can work well with ESL writers:



1. **Recognize Writing Style Differences Can Be Cultural**—

Ideal essay or sentence structure can vary a lot from one culture to another; what is considered “fair use” or “plagiarism” can also vary between cultures. Thus, it is your job as a tutor to help writers understand what American professors tend to want (while still allowing a writer ownership of their own paper and choices over the writing process).

2. **Work From Strengths**—Speak about writing by focusing first on what is strong about a writer’s approach and try to build up from these strengths. For instance, point out an area of the paper where a writer has done something well, and then guide them in working on that skill in other areas of the paper.

3. **Offer Choices**—An ESL writer may find it more difficult to answer some of your open-ended questions. If you decide it’s appropriate to give direct help, provide choices so that the writer is actively involved in the decision making process. For example you might say, “You could use the word ‘X’ or the word ‘Y’ here” or “This sentence could work well if moved to the third or the fourth

paragraph.” Choices allow the writer to retain ownership of their paper.

4. **Be Direct**—Inform the writer of the cultural expectations for effective writing, but recognize that professors are not all looking for the same thing. For instance, you might say, “Professors here often expect...” or “It is common for a writer here to... do you think that is what this professor wants you to do?”

5. **Use Resources**— Help the writer use writing/grammar guides or the internet as a resource to gain more independence. This can also help you if you want to learn more about a skill along with the student.

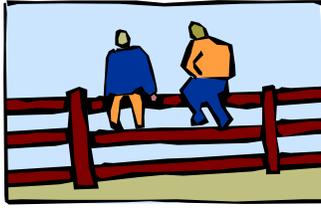
6. **Rephrase**—Try explaining things multiple ways and rephrase as needed.

7. **Use visuals/pictures**— Illustrate/draw out concepts or encourage the writer to do so to aid in mutual understanding.

8. **Still Prioritize**—Remember that the goal is still to focus on one or two major areas of writing to help the writer gain independence. While ESL writer will often ask for just “grammar” help, offer to help with idea development, use of research, organization, etc. first.

9. **Encourage questions**—ask questions and encourage the writer to ask questions.

SETTING BOUNDARIES



YOUR ROLE

First, understand that your role is not to help writers leave with perfect papers—your role is to help writers learn new writing strategies and become increasingly independent. Be direct in communicating with writers about the center’s goals, approaches and methods.

RESPECTING WRITERS

Show enthusiasm and communicate in positive terms with tutors about how the center works. Help writers to recognize their strengths. Keep information about writer visits and paper content confidential. If you find a paper’s content to be uninformed or personally offensive, find helpful but respectful ways to communicate with the tutor. For instance, you might say, “Some people reading your paper might think...” Allow writers to ultimately decide what changes are made to their paper.

RESPECTING PROFESSORS

We want professors to value the Writing Center and to send their writers to use our services. It is important to talk about professors in respectful ways even if you do not agree with their policies, grading or methods. It is okay to listen to an upset writer tell you about their challenges with a professor, but then you should to guide the session towards a question like, “What do you

think the professor wants you to do with this paper?”

Do not try to predict what grade a professor might give nor offer your opinion on grades a professor has given.

RESPECTING OTHER TUTORS

Remember that your shiftmate is counting on you. Show up to all your shifts on time, and find a substitute when you must be absent. Take turns working with drop-in clients. Share supplies and space. Let other tutors know when their tutoring style has inspired you to try new techniques.

RESPECTING YOURSELF

It is important to be polite, but assertive, about respecting your own needs and center



policies. For example, close the center at closing time and take brief water fountain/ restroom breaks if doing continual tutoring. If a

writer’s behavior or writing seems highly inappropriate, inform them that you are not able to continue working with them for that session but that the center coordinator would be glad to work with them. Please communicate with the coordinator about any problems you may be having with writers or other tutors.

EVALUATIONS

We will have several ways of evaluating our program and your tutoring. These are designed to help us recognize our strengths and create goals for improvement.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Writers who visit the center will fill out satisfaction surveys. This data will be

complied to help us set goals in improving the tutoring environment and our tutoring methods.

SELF REFLECTION

As part of your evaluation, I will ask you to write a self-reflection about how you have grown as a tutor, what new strategies or ideas you have tried, and what you want to learn about and try in the future.

PEER OBSERVATION

While new tutors will do several observations at the beginning of their tutoring career, about once a semester I will ask all tutors to observe another tutor's session and write about the experience. The focus of this observation will be to gain new ideas for tutoring and to reflect on the wide range of ways to approach a tutoring situation.

TIME SHEETS AND GETTING PAID

OBTAINING AND SUBMITTING



Blank green time sheets will be kept in the center, or you can pick them up at the cashier's window.

To get paid on time, please turn in your time sheet by the deadlines on the schedule (given at the end of this handbook). Please submit your time sheet to the manila timesheet folder in the center .

FILLING OUT YOUR TIME SHEET

Please see the sample filled-out time sheet at the end of this handbook. For your

department write "Writing Center" and for your job title write "Tutor."

Don't forget to fill in your SS# and sign the sheet. If you would prefer that the coordinator fill in your SS#, please let her know (and of course, give her the number).

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

If you participate in special center activities, please check with the coordinator about how to put these on your time sheet. Add center meetings and trainings to your time sheet. Three class visits equal an hour. If you help create or give an evening workshop, discuss with the coordinator how to put your planning time on your time sheet.

GETTING PAID

There is a direct deposit form at the end of this handbook you can use to have your pay deposited into a bank account. (Submit this form to the college's Human



Resources Department). If you'd prefer a check, pick up your check at the cashier's window in the administration building on pay dates.

FORMS

The following forms are attached to this handbook. If you need additional copies, please inform the center coordinator.

1. Sample "What We Practiced" form
2. Sample filled out timesheet
3. Direct deposit form
4. Payroll date schedule

OTHER CAMPUS RESOURCES

As you work with students, you may find that they could use assistance with areas beyond the scope of the Writing Center. Here is an overview of other campus departments that can assist students in various academic, social, emotional and other areas:

THE ACADEMIC LEARNING CENTER: GENERAL TUTORING AND STUDY SKILLS

For tutoring in other subjects and guidance with study skills/time management, etc., please refer students to the Academic Learning Center (basement of the administration building) at (610) 921-7662.

THE COUNSELING CENTER

For counseling on academic, social, emotional and other concerns, please refer students to the Counseling Center at (610) 921-7532.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER: RESUMES, JOB LETTERS, ETC.

While you should help students with any documents they bring to the Writing Center, if students would like more feedback on job-related documents, including resumes and cover letters, please refer them to the Career Development Center at (610) 921-7630.

LIBRARY RESEARCH HELP: ONLINE AND DATABASE RESEARCH

While we do help students with research skills, if students would like to work with a professional reference/research librarian, please refer them to the reference librarians at the college's Gingrich Library. The library phone number is (610) 921-7517.