



Writing Center's Guide for Writing Consultants

(Revised Fall 2013)

AC-1C18
(718)262-2494

Writing Center Director: Douglas DiToro
dditorio@york.cuny.edu
(718)262-2493

Writing Center Manager: Carollette McDonald
cmcdonald@york.cuny.edu
(718)262-2591

Writing Center Coordinator: JoAnn Glenn
jglenn@york.cuny.edu
(718)262-2594

Hours of Operation:

Monday-Thursday	10 AM – 8 PM
Friday and Saturday	10 AM – 3 PM

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York College Writing Center's Mission Statement

We endeavor to help students develop the necessary skills which will enable them to succeed in their college-level writing classes and careers. Our Writing Consultants are capable of working with students who are in Writing/writing-intensive classes or preparing personal statements for graduate school.

Our Minimalist approach to tutoring encourages students to take an active role in all components of the writing process. Putting this theory into practice allows students, guided by Writing Consultants, to take ownership of their ideas and to hone their critical thinking and analysis skills and translate them into their own reading and writing.

The Writing Center is student-oriented and our goal is to assist students to become proficient at recognizing their strengths and to trust in their abilities thereby helping them to become competent, self-reliant, confident writers.

Introduction

This guide is written for Writing Consultants in the York College Writing Center. If you are returning to tutor this semester, it is intended to refresh your love for the work of tutoring and to renew your focus regarding the center's efforts with helping the students we serve. For the newcomers, this guide is an introduction to the center and our tutoring philosophy. Welcome! We hope that you enjoy reading the guide and that you'll refer to it if and when necessary.

Though there are many tutoring philosophies that the Writing Center could employ, we find that the Minimalist approach to tutoring is most effective. In his 1991 Writing Lab Newsletter article, "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work," Jeff Brooks notes, "The less we do *to* the paper, the better. Our primary object in the writing center session is not the paper, but the student. Fixing flawed papers is easy; showing the students how to fix their own papers is complex and difficult" (15.6). Brooks' method encapsulates the reasoning behind Minimalist Tutoring. As such, this approach puts the onus where it belongs—on the student. The Writing Consultant's role is to prompt the student with questions, actively listen to the responses, and to allow the student time to think and write. The student, in turn, should be encouraged to make discoveries and to take responsibility for his or her own work by responding to questions and writing during the session. Minimalist Tutoring, therefore, requires that students take a proactive role in their own learning.

While we believe this approach is in the best interest of the student, you will undoubtedly meet with resistance at times. When it happens, as it will, take a deep breath, and remember to have a modicum of

compassion and understanding about the difficulties the individual sitting at the table with you is facing at that moment.

This guide will discuss what you should expect from your students and what they should expect from you. It will also provide strategies and techniques to use when you encounter resistant students. The guide also highlights the sessions of some Writing Consultants who have had very rewarding experiences.

As you read through this guide, please be mindful of our mission statement and how it underpins our day-to-day operations. As an extension of the mission statement, which acknowledges that we are a student-oriented center, we want to let you know that students are not our only priority—you are as well. Your contributions, willingness to work, enthusiasm and commitment to your job are what make the center the warm, inviting place it is for students who want tutoring, to use the computers, or need a quiet place to study. We appreciate each of you, who you are, and what you bring to the center. Your individual strengths aid in the efficient functioning of the center. For all of your efforts, we say—Thank you, you are valued.

We hope that as Writing Consultants you will all feel a sense of fulfillment through the support you provide for our students, and that working at the Writing Center affords you worthwhile experiences which help to shape you as students and writers. This guide is yours to use as a resource. Please feel free to make suggestions. Our aim is to continually improve the guide as we continually improve our services.

Carolette McDonald and JoAnn Glenn
Writing Center Manager, Writing Center Coordinator (Fall 2013)

One Head, Many Hats

Students are not necessarily comfortable coming to the writing center for help with their writing. Oftentimes, they perceive seeking help as a weakness or failing on their part. Consider the apprehension of the student with limited writing skills, the ESL/ELL student, the student with different learning abilities, the non-traditional student, and the cultural differences that may present a barrier to a student's learning. Since the Writing Consultant's job is different than the professor's, are you equipped to help every one of these students? As Writing Consultants, you fill many roles. While your education and training have prepared you to help students with the practical aspects of tutoring, from the writing process—planning, organizing and writing to mechanics (grammar, punctuation etc..) are you also outfitted for the not-so-obvious facets of the job? Your ability to take on the particular persona that each session requires may be what determines your students' comfort level and whether they leave their sessions feeling like they have accomplished something, and you walk away knowing that you've helped them in that effort.

So, how does a Writing Consultant navigate this considerable maze? Using GPS (Guided Practical Suggestions) is the key to successfully traversing the tutoring enigma. Yes, I used a pun and a corny acronym, but it's important to note that your role is more than simply helping students correct mistakes in their papers. Each session with a student is unique, and sometimes your session is less about the assignment or the paper and more about the student. At times, you may find yourself playing the role of coach, facilitator, counselor or mentor, among other functions, and you'll be saying, "but I only signed up for the job of tutoring, so how did this happen"? While the many

hats you might wear may seem daunting to you at first, do not become intimidated or discouraged. Of course, if you feel uncomfortable, or that any of this is more than you can manage, you should get the director, manager or coordinator involved. It is okay to ask for help if you deem it necessary. However, when you help students at any stage of the writing process, not only are you providing them with practical advice, but also the less obvious transferrable skills that will help them adapt and ultimately succeed in college and in their broader lives. Time spent in a drop-in session showing a student how to utilize library databases is a quick introduction to how to conduct research. Similarly, when you spend weeks helping a student with a multi-draft essay, you've helped that student with time and project management. And when that student returns, with a grade she is pleased with, to say thanks for your assistance, you've contributed to building her confidence, both as a writer and a student.

Rewarding experiences such as these not only help the student "find his or her voice," but also help you, the writing consultant learn about yourself and the multiple roles you are capable of playing. Writing Consultant A states:

I have always been a shy person. Needless to say, tutoring was going to change that. Well, not right away. Even though I felt I was an adequate tutor, I would look at my colleagues in amazement as they confidently led workshops. I was convinced their ability to lead workshops was the result of years of experience. Then I asked myself, how long had I been tutoring? Two, no-three- wait, four years? It was time for me to prove myself. I volunteered to conduct a workshop with a colleague. Our workshop was on structuring the college level essay. I realized that I was saying the

same things I had said in many sessions before. Now I was saying it to more than one person. I discussed the format of an introduction, explained what a thesis statement is, and discussed the purpose of topic sentences. I liked when students responded. I liked hearing their input and their answers to my questions. I would later volunteer to do in class visits. I would tell students what it is we do at the Writing Center, and finally felt more at ease talking in front of large groups of people. Now, I tell students that even though college writing can be difficult, it can be accomplished.

As Writing Consultant A learned, tutoring helps us make discoveries about ourselves, as we develop confidence. Growth is gratifying for both student and writing consultant. However, sometimes getting a student to that point can take a circuitous route. Writing Consultant B recalls the difficulties of trying to keep a student focused and on task:

I worked with a regularly scheduled student who did not complete any of her assignments. She would come with a completed introduction but never a completed essay. The introduction usually lacked a direct topic sentence and a thesis, there was no direction. We would have to work on an outline to develop the thesis, but while attempting to construct the timeline, the student would usually explain why it was such an arduous task for her. She would discuss her life and problematic situations she encountered that prevented her from focusing on her essay. I comprehended that she was facing personal issues, which isolated her from school. I listened to her and suggested that she attempt to finish her assignment in a library or away from distracting situations. I then reminded her that we were limited on time and needed to complete the outline in order for her to complete the essay. When she began to lose focus, I would ask her a question pertaining to the assignment, which would get her back on track.

I found out that asking her questions kept the session interesting and kept the student engaged. We were able to develop the outline through the process of asking questions.

As these two examples illustrate, tutoring takes confidence and dexterity. Your job is to guide, suggest, advise, motivate and encourage the student to trust in his/her abilities. Just as you have evolved into a better writer over time, convince your student that with help, he/she can too. Although the temptation to take control is constantly present, remember it is not your job as a Writing Consultant to showcase your own writing and research skills, to edit, or assume responsibility for the student's paper. Persuading a student that he/she can become a better writer is not always easy, but it's not impossible to do. As you get to know your students and their needs, you will instinctually know which hat is needed in the moment.

Piled Higher and Deeper by Jorge Cham

www.phdcomics.com



title: "I am a writing god!" - originally published 1/29/2003

Tutor Resources

The Writing Center and its Writing Consultants have proven to be a valuable resource for the York College student community. In order to help you fulfill your responsibilities effectively the Center has many resources you can draw upon:

- The two revolving racks (near the front desk) offer 28 Infosheets from the Writing Fellows on how to organize a paper, develop a thesis statement, cite sources, make claims and explain the different types of paragraphs. You are encouraged to use these sheets in your tutoring sessions, or as handouts to reinforce a point(s) brought up in your sessions.
 - The York College databases can be found on the Library website. Using the databases allows you, the Writing Consultant, to help the student do research, find quotes, articles, books, statistics and more.
 - There is also a compiled list of websites on the Writing Consultant's (behind the front counter) computer in the Tutor Resource folder on the desktop.
 - Each other!!!! All of you have knowledge of writing and what that means, but there will be times when you may become stumped or puzzled by some aspect of writing. When and if you find yourself in a situation where you don't readily know the answer to something, do not hesitate to ask a fellow Writing Consultant. You all possess a great deal of knowledge and the only way to increase that knowledge is by sharing it.
- We have also been fortunate to have had one of our Writing Consultants work with a Program Planning professor on what his class requires. The infosheets for his class can be found behind the front desk on the bookcase in the red binder.
 - There are also Literature Review Infosheets for Occupational Therapy classes, along with a white binder full of suggestions for Teaching Writing to Students.
 - Behind the counter there are copies of the texts used in English 125/126 and English 200 classes. Copies of *Roget's Thesaurus*, *The Bedford Handbook*, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, dictionaries, and various books on tutoring and grammar.
 - The Center also offers training sessions to reinforce and strengthen your tutoring skills. In addition, each semester there are tutoring workshops on thesis development, essay formatting/ development, grammar, MLA/ APA citations, and conducting research online among others. We suggest that while the workshops are running that you sit-in on them, as there will be no tutoring or computer usage during those times.

Tutoring Preferences

The Writing Center offers students flexibility in their choice of tutoring sessions by offering scheduled and drop-in sessions. Currently, drop-in sessions are 25 minutes and students can do two drop-in sessions a week during the semester. Students may also schedule drop-in visits, but these visits will still be 25 minutes each. Regularly scheduled sessions are 50 minutes in length and are done by application in the first few weeks of the semester. The scheduled student will be meeting with his/ her Writing Consultant once a week for at least 14 weeks of the semester. In addition to the weekly scheduled meeting, the student can also have a weekly drop-in session.

At the beginning of the fall and spring semesters students have the opportunity to sign-up for scheduled tutoring sessions. In these sessions, the student has the opportunity to work on one or several different writing issues that will enable the student to become more proficient in terms of editing, and proofreading his/ her papers. Each session might be used to work on a problem area with the student's writing, but as the Writing Consultant you must remember that it is not your job to "fix" the paper during the session. Instead, you, as the Writing Consultant, should try different techniques to get your student to become actively engaged in his/ her writing and to take ownership of any and all corrections and/ or changes. Having the student involved will make the tutoring session more productive and satisfying to both the student and yourself.

It is important to remember, at the start of each tutoring session, to introduce yourself and point out the duration of the current tutoring

session (25 min. for drop-ins and scheduled drop-ins and 50 min. for regularly scheduled sessions). Your introduction works to put the student at ease and to let them know how long you'll be able to work with them. The goal of each session is to have the student come away with a new skill and experience that will work towards them becoming better writers.

If you have no student scheduled at any time during your work day, you will be expected to take a drop-in student from the drop-in list on the front desk. You need to check the drop-in list after ascertaining, in the scheduling book, that you have no student scheduled for the hour or half-hour. In addition, you should go online to check if students have submitted work via the writing center's eTutoring service.

It is our hope that each of your tutoring sessions will be productive and pleasant. If at any time you have any problems, issues, or questions during your tutoring session(s) feel free to ask another Writing Consultant, the Manager, or Coordinator for help or advice.

You are working here because we know that you are more than capable of helping students navigate the ins and outs of academic writing. Initially, you may feel unsure or nervous about the information you are imparting to students, but relax and have confidence in your abilities to do the best job you can. And remember don't be discouraged if you do your best and the session is not as productive as you wish, the next one may be much better.

York College Writing Center

Bill of Rights

What Students Can Expect from a Tutoring Session

- You will receive one-on-one attention.
- You will receive directed, focused help.
- You will know how to do one thing better at the end of a tutoring session than you could when you came in.
- You will participate in a respectful and courteous consultation.
- You will have someone to listen to you and your ideas.
- You will receive help with Writing and Critical Thinking Skills.
- You will receive help finding and using writing resources (e.g. grammar handbooks, library resources).

What Students Shouldn't Expect

- **No one will edit** your work for you. Any work that needs to be done on a paper will be done by the student, not the tutor.
- Your tutor **will not** fix your paper. He or she will help you make it stronger, but it may not be “perfect” at the end of the tutoring session.
- Your tutor **will not** write the paper for you.

- Your tutor **will not** tell you what to write, though he/she will guide you so that you can figure that out for yourself.
- A piece of writing cannot be transformed in one session.
- Your tutor **will not** tell you what grade a paper will, or should, receive. Only the instructor can make comments about grading or assign grades.

What a Tutor Can Expect of a Student

- You should see evidence the student will be doing his/her own work.
- You should be part of a respectful and courteous interaction.
- The student has come to his/her tutoring session with the materials she/he needs to work.
- The student has come to tutoring prepared to work with the tutor.

I understand that I will be assigned a regular tutoring appointment at the same time each week. I agree to attend all scheduled sessions. I am aware that two absences without prior notification will result in the loss of my regular scheduled appointment.

Academic Integrity

The Writing Center's Bill of Rights states that writing consultants should "See evidence that a student will be doing his/her own work". In the course of tutoring students, you may encounter instances where students have had someone else write the paper for them, or they may have co-opted information readily available on the internet and are presenting it as their own work. In some cases, although most of the ideas in the student's paper may be his or her own ideas, he/she may simply not have properly cited textual support for those ideas. However, when it is clear that the student has plagiarized work, ideas or language, accusing the student of doing so, will likely lead to him/her becoming defensive and confrontational. The last thing you want to do is levy the charge of plagiarism directly at the student.

Whenever you suspect a student of plagiarism, it is important to proceed with caution. Diplomatically ask your student if he or she has used other sources in his/her work. Also ask him/her to clarify for you those ideas which are his/hers and which ones should be attributed to outside sources. Your tutoring session may even become an opportunity to familiarize your student with the *Bedford Handbook* or another resource which illustrates proper citation. Sometimes, getting students to cite properly may not be easily accomplished. The student may not want to rewrite an entire paper, or in the case of the rushed student, may not have the time to make the necessary corrections. If this happens, you are still obligated to let the student know about giving credit to sources, and your Tutoring Report should indicate that you had this discussion with the student as well.

YORK COLLEGE'S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

York College gives four definitions of types of academic integrity violation (these definitions can be found in the York College policy on academic integrity, which are linked below):

- **Cheating:** Cheating is the unauthorized use or attempted use of material, information, notes, study aids, devices or communication during an academic exercise.
- **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the act of presenting another's ideas, research or writings as your own.
- **Obtaining Unfair Advantage:** Obtaining Unfair Advantage is any activity that intentionally or unintentionally gives a student an unfair advantage in his/her academic work over another student.
- **Falsification of Official Documents**

York College's policies and procedures concerning academic integrity can be found here:

<http://www.york.cuny.edu/president/legal-compliance/legal-affairs/cuny-legal-policies-procedures/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf>.

For more information about plagiarism, see the York College Bulletin, "Definitions and examples of Academic Dishonesty" (31-32), <http://www.york.cuny.edu/bulletin/2009-2010-YorkBulletin.pdf> and Purdue University's Online Writing Lab resource, "Avoiding Plagiarism,"

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html.

Other Business

In order for the writing center to function efficiently, all staff must adhere to the following:

Lateness

If you are running late, please call, email or text the Manager or Coordinator so that we can notify your scheduled students and any students awaiting a drop-in session.

If you arrive late to your session, you cannot make up missed time by working past the scheduled end of your shift. Work shifts begin on the hour. You are allowed a 10 minute grace period after the start of your shift. If you are scheduled to begin work at 10:00 AM, and you arrive between 10:00 and 10:10 AM, you must sign in at 10 o'clock. For all minute increments after 10 minutes past the start hour, you must sign in for the next $\frac{1}{4}$ hour increment. For example, if your shift starts at 10:00 AM and you arrive between 10:11 AM and 10:15 AM, you must sign in at 10:15 AM.

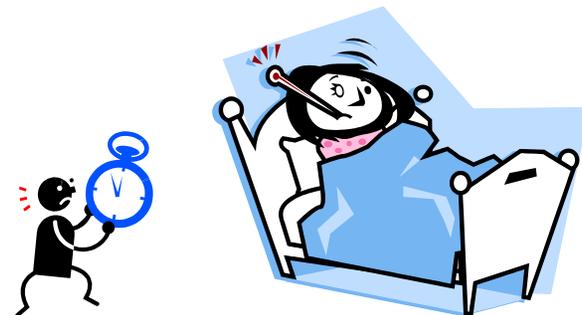
If you are regularly late (more than 3 times), for the start of your shift, your schedule will be changed so that you start one hour later. If following this change your lateness persists, you will be placed on probation for at least two weeks; being late more than twice, during the probationary period will result in termination of your employment at the writing center.

Absence

We know that some days you may not be able to make it in to work. Although your absence may cause a hitch in the day, if we are given adequate notice, the Center's operations need not be adversely affected. Call, email or text the Manager or Coordinator as soon as you realize you need time off. If possible, unless there is an unforeseen circumstance or emergency, please give at least 24 hours notice.

More than 4 absences in a semester, without a doctor's note confirming illness, will result in you being placed on probation for the duration of the semester. Any absences during the probationary period will lead to termination of your employment.

We recognize that many of you are tutoring here while preparing for other opportunities, but the habits you form now with this job will carry over when you enter the professional work world. Therefore, it is important to use this time to develop the foundations of the well-rounded professional you desire to become.



Time Sheets

It is your responsibility to ensure that your time sheet is submitted to the Payroll office on time.

Complete and sign your time sheet daily, so that if you are absent when time sheets are due, it can still be submitted.

Recording Hours

All time on your time sheets should be reflected in quarter-hour, half-hour or hour increments:

15 minutes after the hour = .25

30 minutes after the hour = .50

45 minutes after the hour = .75

See sample time sheet (Figure A) for examples of how the following entries should be reflected:

- Sign in and out times
- Meal (break) periods
- Sick hours*
- Annual leave hours*
- Total number of hours worked

After you have worked 5 consecutive hours in a day, you must take at least a 30 minute unpaid break. These breaks should be indicated in the "Meal Period" column on your time sheet.

*Contact the Payroll Office for your Sick and Annual leave hours. You may enter these hours to make up for missed time.

HOURLY EMPLOYEE TIMESHEET YORK COLLEGE PAYROLL OFFICE											
TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR											
TITLE:						APPOINTED HOURS:					
DEPT#: 59501						TOTAL HOURS USED TO DATE:					
PAF#						BALANCE HOURS:					
PAYROLL PERIOD: _____											
NAME: LAST _____						FIRST: _____					
SOC. SEC. NO. XXX-XX-_____ <small>(Last four digits only)</small>						DEPARTMENT: English/Writing Center					
No.	Day	Date	Time In	Meal Period	Time Out	# Hours Worked	Sick Hours	Annual Hours	Total	Shift Hours	Signature
1	SUN										
2	MON	XX/XX	10:00	1 hr	5:00	6			6		Your signature
3	TUES	XX/XX	5:00		8:00			3	3		Your signature
4	WED										
5	THURS	XX/XX	2:15		6:00	3.75			3.75		Your signature
6	FRI										
7	SAT	XX/XX	12:45		2:00	1.25			1.25		Your signature
WEEKLY SUB-TOTAL:									14		
8	SUN										
9	MON										
10	TUES	XX/XX	10:30	1 hr	4:30	5			5		Your signature
11	WED										
12	THURS	XX/XX	6:15		8:00		1.75		1.75		Your signature
13	FRI	XX/XX	5:00		7:30	2.5			2.5		Your signature
14	SAT										
WEEKLY SUB-TOTAL:									9.25		
TOTAL HOURS:									23.25		
I certify that the hours above have been worked. Sick and/or annual leave hours have to be taken as indicated. All computations are correct and there are sufficient funds in my allocation to pay this expenditure.											
Supervisor's Signature _____						2494		Director's Signature _____			
Prepared By _____						Department's Extension		Chairperson/Authorized Representative			

Figure A

Classroom Visits

Each semester, we conduct classroom visits to inform instructors and students about the Center's services. You may be called upon to represent the Center for one of these visits. If you are drafted, or volunteer to go, remember to take a stack of the Center's Bill of Rights fliers, eTutoring fliers, and referral forms for the instructors and a handful of bookmarks. Whenever possible, you will be notified via email that you have been scheduled for a classroom visit. The email will include the date, time, classroom location, course, professor's name and any other relevant information.

Your talk should give a brief overview of the Center's functions (i.e.) the different types of tutoring sessions, duration of tutoring sessions, the kinds of help offered, what students can expect from their sessions, and what professors can expect when their students come for tutoring. You should ask if the students or the instructor has any questions, and remember to mention the Center's physical location and current hours of operation.



Writing Workshops

For the past few semesters the Writing Center has been offering workshops on grammar, MLA/ APA citation, on-line research, essay structure, punctuation, and other topics. The purpose of these workshops is to help students with common writing issues that often crop up in tutoring sessions and assignments. The workshops are facilitated by your fellow consultants and thus far have been a great addition to the effectiveness of the Writing Center.

We encourage all of you to participate as workshop facilitators choosing a topic that you would like to present. The workshops are given on Tuesdays during club hours from 12 – 2 PM.

Student Satisfaction Surveys

Anonymous student satisfaction surveys are administered each semester, as the term begins to wind down. The information gleaned from the respondents helps us to assess the service we provide, and more importantly, whether students are pleased with the service. The surveys will be placed on the green tables in the tutoring area. At the beginning of your sessions, let your students know that you will leave a few minutes at the end for them to complete the form. All completed forms should be placed in the survey collection box on the front counter.

Scheduling Appointments

All student appointments are scheduled by the Manager and Coordinator ONLY. This practice is in place to minimize instances of double-booked students. The Manager's and Coordinator's schedules are structured so that one or both are working every hour the Center is operational. Please refer all students needing to make or change appointments to them.

Tutoring Log and Drop in Sign-in Sheet

Tutoring logs must be completed for each student and tutoring session. Please ensure that your student has legibly completed all of the required information on the log. It is important for our recordkeeping that we know how many students we tutored and who worked with them. As with the Tutoring Log, please make sure that all students seeking a drop-in tutoring session sign the Drop-in Waiting List on the front table. In the event that we have numerous students waiting for tutoring, the list helps us to assist them on a first-come first-served basis.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the Writing Center Writing Consultants currently providing support for the students of York College. Your tutoring techniques, feedback and ideas have been essential in compiling this document. Special thanks to Writing Consultants Zaheeda Inshan and Saakhena Ali for their contributions to the guide.

This updated edition of the *York College Writing Consultants Guide* is based on the first edition of the *York College Writing Center Guide for Tutors* created by former Writing Center Director Dr. Heather Robinson.