

Developing Good Writing Skills

How Reading Can Help You Write

"If you want to write well. . . read, read, and then read some more. Read good writing. Read bad writing. Learn to know the difference. Note for simplicity of style: noun, verb, object; noun, verb, object. It worked for Hemingway, who often said that his ultimate goal was to create the perfect sentence. Read some Hemingway, and not just his novels, but some of his early newspaper writing. There's never been better news and feature writing, ever. When you read the works of these and other fine writers, notice the simplicity of their language and how they vary their sentence structure and length. Some sentences number two or three words; others run an entire paragraph. There are countless tips on writing well, but I leave you with this one: read first, then write."

- By Bill Reed

Learn to Write Well

"Writing can be a drag . . . especially if you don't think you're very good at it. It's a skill, however, that you need to develop in order to be competitive in today's society. While you're a student, take the time to learn to write well. Take more than the required English and writing courses. I'd be willing to bet you'll find these classes to be quite valuable when you try to find and keep a job after graduation. And don't worry if you end up having trouble in these classes. You can always enlist the help of the good folks at the Writing Center. And one more thing . . . a good way to practice your writing without the stress of a grade hanging over your head, is to take part in extra-curricular activities that involve writing."

- By Emily Sinsabaugh

Writing a Paper or Researching an Assignment? Start Early

"Let's face it. We are all afraid of writing papers. We procrastinate until the night before that essay or reserach assignment is due. We then write as the night passes in the hope that some sort of last-minute inspiration will light down from the heavens, the clouds will dissipate and the sun will poke its head above the horizon, and the rivers will gush forth those wonderfully profound ideas that have hidden themselves in the darkness. Beautifully as all this sounds, it does not happen without a great deal of advance preparation.

What does happen is that we ofen compose into the wee hours of the morning, and as the clock ticks on, we get progressively tired--so tired that we do a sloppy job. We forget to proofread, or when we do we are so tired of the paper that we cannot see convoluted ideas, faulty reasoning, and missing commas. We submit the paper with a prayer and hope for the best. And when we get that unsatisfactory grade, we vow that we will NEVER again put things off until the last minute. How do we accomplish this? I have several suggestions:

1. Get started on the paper the day that it is assigned. This doesn't mean that one actually start writing the paper but rather it means that you at least think about the topic. Take a small pad of paper so that you can jot down ideas. Keep a journal that you can draw upon for that interesting

perspective toward the topic.

2. Start writing the rough draft at least a week before the assignment is due. In this way, you leave yourself plenty of time to walk away from the paper when the going gets tough. Often, a short break--a trip to the snackshop, or a game of PacMan--will clear your mind so that you can begin to write again.

3. Go the Center for Writing. It is often important that we talk our ideas out before we can get them clearly on paper. Important to this process is a basic knowledge of those who will read your paper.

What do they already know?

What do they need to know?

What terms or concepts do you need to explain?

What connections do you need to make?

A conference with a writing tutor in your Writing Center can often help you to clarify those issues. If you cannot get ideas down on paper, bring your notes and talk your ideas out with the tutors so that you can get concepts down clearly on the page. If you can't tell a comma from a semicolon, have the tutor help you sort out those tricky rules of grammar. The Center for Writing can help you out at any point in the research and writing process.

Writing need not be a terrible agonizing process, and you need not write papers the night before. Hopefully, thinking about the paper right away, getting a draft written at least before, and getting help in the Center for Writing will get you that good grade next time you have to write a paper."

- By Bob Holderer

The Rest of the Story

"I used to think that successful writers must be naturally gifted creatures who always managed to get everything right the first time. That's why I'd lie to friends in college when they asked me how much time I'd spend on a paper. "An hour or so,?" I'd shrug--when really it was more like ten. It wasn't until years later that I learned even geniuses like Virginia Woolf and Ernest Hemingway spent incredible amounts of time writing and rewriting and polishing their work. So take a tip from geniuses and non-geniuses alike. When you know you've got a writing project due, start early. Don't think of your trash can as an enemy, but as a hungry pet that likes to be fed regularly. Then take what's left--the good stuff--polish it up like a genie's lamp, and sit back and hope for what all writers hope for: a magical connection with your reader."

- By Russell Chamberlain

Hip Hop to the Writing Lab

"The writing lab is where you go for success. Success equals "A's" and I'm alright with that. The writing lab is where I go to succeed. Develop papers that will meet the teachers need. They will

critique and help you form a thesis that is sweet. Develop structure in your paper. Bring your skills to peak, so don't procrastinate. Don't debate. Just go to the lab to correct your mistakes on the grammatical tip their crew is tight. So don't worry about failure, because that's no where in sight. So use the facilities and you'll be a writing skill master just wait and see."

- By Richard Snow

Writing Skills

"Read choose anything, but read something. Keeping a focus on the way others conform words in a sentence. Start keeping a daily calender so you don't forget the assignments' due and other events that could be an issue if not reviewing your material. Write constantly, in doing this you keep your skills in writing on top shape. An exercise for the mind and vocabulary skills intact."

- Andrea Michelle Jones

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