

# Effective College Writing

Writing effectively is one of the most important skills you can develop at the university. It is extremely difficult to put your knowledge and skills to practical use if you cannot communicate your ideas and abilities to others. One of the aims of this course is to provide you with an opportunity to practice writing skills.

## What Makes Good Writing?

Clear writing reflects clear thinking. Before you sit down to write, think about your topic and come up with something substantive and original to say. Writing well is not easy; it requires you to work at it. Good writing generally is the product of a process of rewriting; it rarely happens on the first draft. Once you have your ideas down, review what you have written, looking for spelling and grammatical errors, considering ways to clarify each sentence, and checking to see if your sentences and paragraphs develop a point. You may want to reorder your sentences and/or paragraphs to improve the flow and clarity of what you have written. Having someone else read your work and make suggestions is extremely helpful. A clear, concise and well-written essay is not a fluke; it is the product of thought and work.

## Tips on Writing Effective Papers

- (1) Prepare an outline before writing the paper. Put your ideas on paper, then organize them to develop a logical flow.
- (2) Use your paper to develop an *argument* or *explanation*. Think in terms of *how* and *why*. In your first paragraph, offer a thesis statement that presents your argument.
- (3) Structure your paragraphs so that the first sentence makes a point and the remaining sentences elaborate on or explain that point. Limit your paragraphs to one central idea. Order your paragraphs so that the topic sentences develop your argument or explanation in a logical flow.
- (4) Write clear and concise sentences. Avoid complex sentence structures and run on sentences.
- (5) Use active rather than passive voice.
- (6) Pay attention to grammar, spelling, style, and punctuation. In particular, make sure your subject and verbs agree in person (singular/plural) and use verb tenses (present, past, participle, etc.) consistently.
- (7) If you use the work of others, make sure you cite it properly. Enclose any borrowed passages in quotation marks.

(8) Have a colleague read and critique your paper before turning it in. Take these comments into account and rewrite your paper before you submit it. Perhaps you can work out an exchange with other classmates to read and comment on each others' papers.

(9) Think of your reader. Put yourself in the position of someone who is reading the paper for the first time, and write so they can understand what you are saying.