

Building your Toolkit:

Steps and Strategies for Teaching Academic Writing

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Why a “Toolkit” Approach?

- No one “right” way to teach writing or to help writers develop
- What works in one classroom may not work in another
- Depends on:
 - Teacher
 - Students
 - Communication needs

Goals for Today's Webinar

- Introduce academic writing
- Go over five steps and strategies for teaching writing
- Give specific examples for each strategy



What is Academic Writing?

Types of academic writing assignments:

- Essay, paper, composition
- Critique, response, book report, summary
- Literature review, research paper
- Lab report
- Case study
- Communication (e.g., email to professor)

5-Paragraph Theme/Essay?

- Many teachers don't think this is an authentic writing activity
 - Overly formulaic and rule-bound; overly tactical
 - No audience or real communication
- Instead, have students practice with many genres and types of messages

(Warner, 2016)

Purposes of Academic Writing

Make the purpose of the writing activity clear to your students:

- Assess?
- Facilitate learning?
- Collaborate on projects?
- Develop critical thinking skills?
- Communicate professionally?
- Join a community?

Academic Writing Contexts

- What is the writing for? How much English will be used professionally? (ESL/EFL)
- Will writing occur in a separate course or as part of other courses?
- Are students writing for a certain class or subject? Or, is the writing for a more general audience?

Approaches to Writing Instruction

1. Text or product approach

- Imitate models; limited analysis
- Focus on text structure, vocabulary, style, spelling

Approaches to Writing Instruction

2. Process approach

- Focus on steps of writing (brainstorming, drafts)
- Express writer's identity

Approaches to Writing Instruction

3. Writing as social practice

– Help students' style

- match expectations of audience/community
- focus on meaning



Chat

- What are your goals for this session today?

Five Steps to an Academic Writing Plan

1. Know the material
2. Do a needs analysis to identify your goals
3. Sequence your goals
4. Develop interactive activities that meet your goals
5. Assess student learning

1. Know the Material

Know the Material

- Talk with colleagues about their experiences
- Inform yourself about academic writing
 - *English Teaching Forum*, U.S. Department of State
 - “Unraveling the Mystery of Academic Writing,” American English webinar, U.S. Department of State

Know the Material

- Attend conferences and look for sessions on writing similar to your situation
 - “College Writing 2.1x: Principles of Written English” online course by Berkeley & EdX
 - TESOL’s Second Language Writing Interest Section
 - TESOL’s Electronic Village Online

Know the Material

- Read up on academic writing expectations and assignments in different fields
 - Is writing in the sciences the same as writing in the humanities or social sciences?
- University of Toronto, Writing in the Sciences
- University of North Carolina
- The Science of Scientific Writing, Gopen & Swan

2. Do a Needs Analysis of your Context in order to Identify your Goals

Do a Needs Analysis

Why?

- Helps you identify your course goals, materials, assignments, and activities

How?

- Analyze students' work: diagnostics, test scores, surveys
- Explore the context: What do students need English for? (work, exams, communication, etc.)

Questions to Consider

1. What do your students know about academic writing? What do they need help with?
2. What opportunities do they have for what they need to learn about academic writing?
3. What are the expectations of their writing context—are they writing for sciences, for the humanities, etc.?

Questions to Consider

- 4. How big is your class?
- 5. Are they a similar proficiency level?
- 6. Do they have the same first language?



Questions to Consider

7. What type of textbook do you have?
8. Do your students have access to computers inside and/or outside of class?



Questions to Consider

9. How will you assess their writing—will you use a rubric? What categories?
10. What type of feedback will you include? Organization, content, grammar?

Example: Cohesion & Coherence

How easy a text is to follow & understand

- Cohesion: How clear the relationships between ideas are
- Coherence: How logically the main ideas are presented, usually moving from general to specific points

Example: Cohesion

What strategies can your advanced students use to build cohesion in their writing?

- Do they over-rely on transition words?
 - *Moreover, however, furthermore, etc.*
- Do they use other strategies effectively?
 - Word repetition or use of synonyms?
 - Starting a sentence with information that is KNOWN to a reader and moving to NEW information?

Cohesion

Many EFL students use too many transition words and no other cohesion strategies

Studies find:

- EFL students use many more transition words than do native speakers of English
- EFL students use a broader range of transition words than do native speakers of English

(Field & Yip, 1992)

Example: Coherence

- Logical organization
 - Sequencing of ideas
 - Usually moving from general to specific points

Needs Analysis Example

CHAT: What would you teach students here?

Needs Analysis Example

CHAT: What would you teach students here?

Your high school students know that they should write one main idea in each paragraph, and put that idea in the first sentence (the topic sentence). However, when they actually write papers, their first sentences don't reflect the main point or organization of the paragraph.

Needs Analysis & Goals Example

What would you teach students here?

- Help students “do” and not just “say”
 - Activities where they can identify and create topic sentences
 - Activities where they can create topic sentences collaboratively

3. Sequence your Goals

Sequence your Goals

- What will you cover first, second, third?
- What will you need to spend more time on?
- What might you need to review later in your course?
- What large goals need to be broken into smaller steps for students to practice?

Sequencing Example

Your high school students are writing a paper using 3 sources. They know they should use quotes or paraphrases from the sources, but they can't seem to identify which ideas to paraphrase from the sources or how to integrate those paraphrases into their own papers. Instead, they are copying sentences.

Sequencing Goals

Sequencing Example

CHAT: What smaller steps could we create to help the students?

Your high school students are writing a paper using 3 sources. They know they should use quotes or paraphrases from the sources, but they can't seem to identify which ideas to paraphrase from the sources or how to integrate those paraphrases into their own papers. Instead, they are copying sentences.

Sequencing Goals

Sequencing Example

Break it into smaller steps:

1.Reading—Activities to help them find information related specifically to their topic

2.Paraphrase & Summarize—Activities to help them paraphrase & summarize ideas they find

Sequencing Example

Break it into smaller steps:

3.Integrating—Activities to help them integrate their paraphrased ideas into their own paper

4.Citation—Activities to help them follow a citation style (e.g., APA, MLA) for in-text citations and the reference list

4. Develop Interactive Activities that Match your Goals

Develop Interactive Activities that Match your Goals

- Train students to figure out language patterns on their own and become critical thinkers
- Use discovery activities
- Use peer response



Interactive Activities

Peer Response

- Increased sense of audience for students
- Increased motivation and confidence
- Improved self-evaluation of own writing
- Allows for negotiation of meaning
- Can save time in class

(Bartels, 2003; Mittan, 1989)

Peer Response Steps

1. Train students

- Provide the type of comments you want
- Be polite and respectful
- Be careful and substantive



Interactive Activities

Peer Response Steps

2. Let students practice with a sample and discuss
3. Decide if students will do anonymous peer review
4. Do peer review in class at least the first time

Coherence Example

Goal:

Help high school students write clear topic sentences

Context:

They know what a topic sentence is, but they struggle to create clear ones themselves.

Interactive Activities

Coherence Example

1. Give students a *well-written paragraph* (you wrote, a former student wrote, from a book, etc.) that is similar to what they will be writing, but remove the first sentence.
2. Ask them to work in groups and write what they think is the first sentence.
3. Lead a class discussion on what characteristics of the paragraph made it easy to write the first sentence.

Example Activity, con't

4. Give the students another paragraph missing its first sentence; however, this paragraph is *not well-written*.
5. Students work in groups to write the topic sentence, but they will struggle and will likely write very different sentences.
6. Lead a discussion on why this first sentence was difficult to write.

Example Activity, con't

7. Ask students to analyze their own papers:
peer review or co-reading papers
 - Analyze if their topic sentences are clear and match the content of the paragraph
 - Can their partners write a first sentence for their paragraphs?

Helping Students' Coherence

Activity: Ordering sentences from a paragraph

Topic: Vitamin C Warning



Vitamin C Warning: What order?

1. Among smokers, thickening rises fivefold.
2. There is bad news for health fanatics who take vitamin C.
3. James Dwyer from the University of Southern California suggests avoiding very high doses of vitamins.
4. A study of 573 middle-aged participants found that those taking 500 milligrams of vitamin C supplement per day had 2.5 times as much thickening of their arteries as people who took no supplements.
5. In high doses Vitamin C may clog up arteries, according to the American Heart Association.

Vitamin C Warning - Order

1. There is bad news for health fanatics who take vitamin C. **General**
2. In high doses Vitamin C may clog up arteries, according to the American Heart Association. **Less general**
3. A study of 573 middle-aged participants found that those taking 500 milligrams of vitamin C supplement per day had 2.5 times as much thickening of their arteries as people who took no supplements. **Specific**
4. Among smokers, thickening rises fivefold.
5. James Dwyer from the University of Southern California suggests avoiding very high doses of vitamins. **As a consequence....**

Cohesion Example

What device do you see? Is it effective or not?

1. Transition words (however, for example, furthermore, etc.)
2. Repetition of words, synonyms, “This” + summary word
3. Starting sentences with KNOWN information and moving to the NEW information

Let's look at an example

Cohesion Example

What device do you see? Is it effective or not?

“The teaching of words and phrases out of context may lead to language use which does not achieve its communicative purposes. Moreover, there is confusion and decreased self-confidence.”

(adapted from Basturkmen, 2002)

Cohesion Example

Not effective: No additive meaning

“The teaching of words and phrases out of context may lead to language use which does not achieve its communicative purposes. Moreover, there is confusion and decreased self-confidence.”

Helping Build Cohesion: 2 Steps

1. Draw students' attention to typical patterns in English texts
2. Help writers see:
 - a. How their ideas are related
 - b. How to sequence ideas to reflect the nature of the relationships
 - c. Words that can be used to show that relationship

(Basturkmen, 2002)

Cohesion Example

How are the ideas related?

1. The teaching of words and phrases out of context may lead to language use which does not achieve its communicative purposes.
2. There is confusion and decreased self-confidence.

Cohesion Example

The 2nd idea is a result of the first:

1. The teaching of words and phrases out of context may lead to **language use which does not achieve its communicative purposes.**
2. There is **confusion and decreased self-confidence.**

Revising for Cohesion

The teaching of words and phrases out of context may lead to language use which does not achieve its communicative purposes. **This miscommunication can result in** not only confusion, but decreased self-confidence as well.

Revising for Cohesion

The teaching of words and phrases out of context may lead to language use which does not achieve its communicative purposes. This **KNOWN information** miscommunication can result in not only **NEW information** confusion, but decreased self-confidence as well.

Revising for Cohesion

The teaching of words and phrases out of context may lead to language use which does not achieve its communicative purposes. This **Relationship Verb** miscommunication can result in not only confusion, but decreased self-confidence as well.

Interactive Activities

5. Assess Student Learning



Chat Box

- What is the difference between assessing student learning, compared to assessing a student's written product?

Learning-Oriented Assessment

Connect and improve instruction:

- Assessment
- Curriculum
- Instruction

Provide accurate, appropriate, and meaningful information about a.) strengths of students' writing and b.) which writing concepts they need to improve

Learning-Oriented Assessment

- Tasks that resemble those from real-life or coursework
- Help teachers understand what students think about their own writing skills and confidence
- Help students identify areas to improve and know how to develop those areas

Assessment Example

1. Beginning of the course: Ask students to write specific goals for their writing development
2. End of the course: Ask students to reflect on those goals and their development
3. Midway through the course: Analyze their papers for future teaching

Analysis Example

Choose a lower-proficiency student and a higher-proficiency student—analyze the papers they have written for class

- In what ways have they demonstrated improvement?
- What other types of activities can you do to address their needs?

Develop a Feedback Plan

What is a feedback plan?

- Your plan for how you'll give students comments on their writing
- I'll show an 8-point feedback plan sample, but you can make your own plan based on your classroom

Sample 8-Point Feedback Plan

1. I will not give feedback on all points
2. I'll include areas for improvement & strengths
3. I'll include an end note explaining main points
4. I'll give 1st draft feedback for content/
organization, 2nd draft for content & grammar
5. I won't just correct their errors

Sample Feedback Plan, con't


6. I'll create a rubric for each assignment and have them practice using it
7. I'll show students examples of the type of feedback I'll give them
8. I'll communicate my plan to my students

Rubrics

Before you can create a rubric, you need to know:

- What main areas you'll grade
- How you'll decide if that area is strong or weak
- Points you'll assign


Free Online Rubric Maker



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Creating and Editing Your Rubric

Here are some quick steps to help you create your rubric. [hide/show](#)

Category:	4	3	2	1
<p>Use of Facts/Statistics ▾</p> <p> If you don't like the text in the box above, you can use the text box below to rename a category or type in a new category name.</p> <input type="text"/> <p>You may add or modify content in the rubric text boxes to the right:</p>	<p>Every major point was well supported with several relevant facts, statistics and/or examples.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>Every major point was adequately supported with relevant facts, statistics and/or examples.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>Every major point was supported with facts, statistics and/or examples, but the relevance of some was questionable.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>Every point was not supported.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>
<p>Presentation Style ▾</p> <p> If you don't like the text in the box above, you can use the text box below to rename a category or type in a new category name.</p> <input type="text"/> <p>You may add or modify content in the rubric text boxes to the right:</p>	<p>Team consistently used gestures, eye contact, tone of voice and a level of enthusiasm in a way that kept the attention of the audience.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>Team usually used gestures, eye contact, tone of voice and a level of enthusiasm in a way that kept the attention of the audience.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>Team sometimes used gestures, eye contact, tone of voice and a level of enthusiasm in a way that kept the attention of the audience.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>One or more members of the team had a presentation style that did not keep the attention of the audience.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>
<p>Organization ▾</p> <p> If you don't like the text in the box above, you can use the text box below to rename a category or type in a new category name.</p> <input type="text"/> <p>You may add or modify content in the rubric text boxes to the right:</p>	<p>All arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>Most arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>All arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) but the organization was sometimes not clear or logical.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>	<p>Arguments were not clearly tied to an idea (premise).</p> <p><input type="button" value="Reset"/></p>

Assess Learning

Assess Student Learning

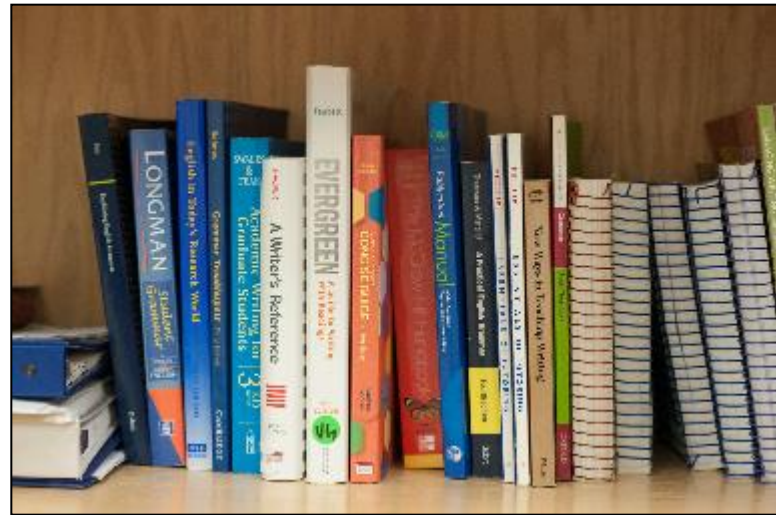
- Focus on helping students learn, not just grading their written product
- Create and follow a feedback plan
- Give students comments on their papers that help them learn for next time
- Use a rubric

Five Steps to an Academic Writing Plan

1. Know the material
2. Do a needs analysis of your context in order to identify your goals
3. Sequence your goals
4. Develop interactive activities that meet your goals
5. Assess student learning

Chat Box

- What do you want to remember as you teach academic writing?



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