

A Guide to Getting the Most Out of Your Writing Fellows Visit

The Writing Fellows can help with any aspect of the writing process, and serve as an audience to give you a reader's feedback. Tutoring sessions usually begin with the tutor asking, "What are your goals?" From there, together, you and the Writing Fellow will discuss your paper, your process, and strategies to help you accomplish your goals. The purpose of these guidelines is to help you think more about where you are in your writing process, what you want to focus on during your session (though it's also fine if you don't know what you want to work on; we can help you get there!), and how to ask questions of the fellows.

During your session, you can address any of these elements of your writing project (or something else!). Remember, you can focus on these aspects of the writing process at any point, even before you have started writing or as you are polishing a final draft; these elements do not always occur in the same order, and sometimes you may skip or combine some of them.

Elements of the writing process:

Discovery:

- *What is it:* This is the most writer-based part of the writing process, and it emerges from your initial ideas or questions about the topic. Freewriting or thinking aloud, putting forth your own ideas in your own language can be really helpful. Tutors are useful as sounding-boards and can ask questions to get you thinking.
- *Goal:* To brainstorm and generate ideas; to say everything and anything; to start to figure out what you think
- *Tips to help you get the most out of your session with the Writing Fellows:*
 - Sample Questions: How can I get started? How do I come up with an idea?
 - Possible Buzzwords: brainstorm, prewrite, bounce ideas
 - How to prepare: It helps if you can bring your prompt!

Focus:

- *What is it:* The process of identifying a topic, developing a manageable question or problem, and, eventually, addressing that question or problem with a working thesis statement.
- *Goal:* To come to a clear and debatable problem or topic, and a working thesis, or even just approach to address it
- *Tips to help you get the most out of your session with the Writing Fellows:*
 - Sample Questions: Does my thesis address the question? Is my thesis arguable? Is my topic too broad? Is my question/problem genuine? Does it allow for multiple answers?
 - Possible Buzzwords: argument, thesis, address the prompt
 - How to prepare: Be ready to try different strategies, like outlining or reverse outlining, or simply talking it out.

Development:

- *What is it:* This is the fleshing out of the problem, the testing of your arguments, and the consideration of objections. Your argument expands into specific points and counterpoints based on your sources, data, and your ideas.

- *Goal:* To make sure each part of your thesis is addressed and fully supported, and that every part of your argument is reflected in your thesis (this is also the time to possibly revise the direction of your argument or change your thesis)
- *Tips to help you get the most out of your session with the Writing Fellows:*
 - Sample Questions: Does my argument have any gaps? Are you convinced? Have I considered potential counterarguments?
 - Potential Buzzwords: develop argument, evaluate sources, integrate quotes or evidence, relevance
 - How to prepare: Have the sources you plan to use in mind, and be thinking about who your audience might be.

Structuring:

- *What is it:* This part of the process is the clarification of an organizational pattern--when you put the arguments in order in paragraph form.
- *Goal:* To divide content into ordered, logical paragraphs according to what you are trying to say and how you are trying to say it (your audience is critical to these choices)
- *Tips to help you get the most out of your session with the Writing Fellows:*
 - Sample Questions: What seems most important to my argument, based on my current paragraph order? How can I make sure my argument makes sense to my audience?
 - Potential Buzzwords: organize, transitions, coherence, clarity
 - How to prepare: Think about what you still need to work on! If you are asking for help with flow, what do you mean? Do you mean at the sentence level? paragraph level? or flow of ideas across the paper? Do you just want to know if what you have so far makes sense? Keep your audience in mind.

Polishing:

- *What is it:* This is the time for editing and proofreading a final draft, as well as paying attention to grammar concerns, conventions, and overall flow.
- *Goal:* To achieve a text that is free of distracting errors and is an easy and worthwhile experience for the reader
- *Tips to help you get the most out of your session with the Writing Fellows:*
 - Sample Questions: Do the stylistic choices I've made work for my intended audience? Are there places where errors or mistakes interfere with your ability to understand the meaning of my text? Can you help me identify the grammatical mistakes I make most often? What is the rule for this punctuation mark? Do any words seem out of place?
 - Potential Buzzwords: identify patterns of grammar concerns, common errors, conventions, repeated mistakes
 - How to prepare: Come in ready to try new editing strategies like reading aloud, or dissecting a single paragraph. Bring a draft you're ready to polish; be at the stage of your writing process where you are ready to focus on small-scale revision and editing (stylistic choices, sentence-level editing).

By Margaret Speer and Sarah Brown