

Getting the most out of a Writing Centre tutorial



Q: What is a writing “tutorial”?

A: A one-to-one session with a writing consultant (“tutor”), up to 55 minutes in length.

Purpose

- To help you become a better writer.

What Happens?

- We look at your paper together.
- You ask questions.
- We try to answer them.
- We also ask you questions to help you approach the writing task.



A tutor can help you at every stage of the writing process

- Brainstorming/outlining/pre-writing
- Drafting
- Integrating research
- Revising
- Editing/proofreading



Something to remember

A tutor does NOT correct or proofread your paper because ...

that does not help you become a better writer.

The tutor will not “fix” your paper, which would be unethical. However, the tutor can teach you writing skills including HOW to proofread your work.

Dos & don'ts

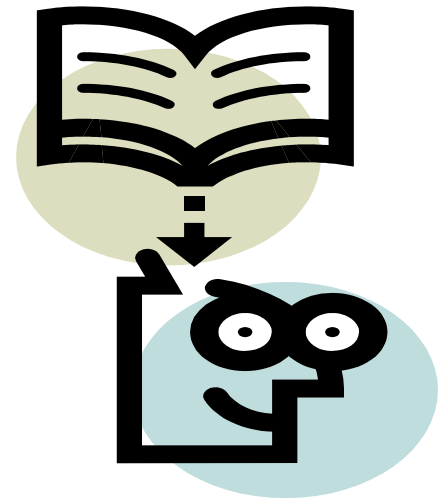
- Plan ahead. Come when you start writing or with a first draft.
- Before you come, set intentions for what you want to accomplish in the tutorial
- Don't wait until the last minute, because you may not get an appointment, and you will also have little time for revision.
- Bring a copy of your instructor's assignment.
- Bring a printed draft of your paper. Instructors will not work on laptops.
- Don't expect to work on too many issues in one tutorial.

Setting intentions

What do you want to focus on? Pinpoint sections or sentences in your draft that you want to discuss with the tutor.

Why is intention-setting important for a successful tutorial?

- Tutorials are different from instruction in the classroom setting. Tutors usually ask you what you want to work on.
- You know your own writing best.
- Be realistic about what can be done in one tutorial, and set priorities.



HOCs and LOCs

To set an agenda for your tutorial effectively, it is important for you to understand differences between Higher Order Concerns and Lower Order Concerns.

- What are HOCs (Higher Order Concerns)?
- What are LOCs (Lower Order Concerns)?

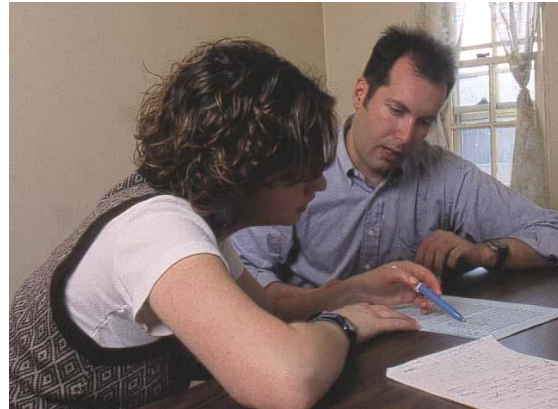
(Read on ...)

Higher Order Concerns

- Focus/thesis
- Purpose
- Audience/readers
- Organization
- Development

Lower Order Concerns

- **Grammar**
 - sentence structure
 - punctuation
 - prepositions
 - articles
 - verb tense
- **Word choice**
- **Spelling**



Imagine you can write two drafts for a paper:

What are you concerned with after writing the first draft?

What are you concerned with after writing the second draft?

Prioritizing

If you want to work on both HOCs and LOCs with a writing tutor, we suggest you plan to work on HOCs first, because

- You have limited time in a tutorial.
- Starting with LOCs may distract you from larger issues (HOCs) that you may need to address.
- After your work on HOCs, you may delete/add some parts.

Five-topic agenda-generator

- Instructions for the assignment
- Your familiarity with the writing task
- Academic writing conventions
- Development
- Lower Order Concerns

Assignment instructions

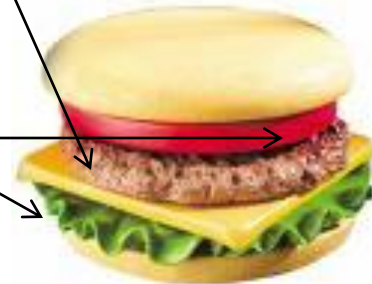
- Do you have any questions/concerns about the instructions for the assignment?
- Is there an assignment sheet?
- Do you have notes on the assignment taken in class?

Familiarity with the task

- Have you worked on this kind of writing task before?
- Have you read samples written by others?
- What questions do you have about the writing task?

Academic writing conventions

- Thesis statement (your main point)
- Structure
- Transitions
- Direct, concise and to the point



Development

Have you supported your main points with supporting details?

For example:

It is important to try to set the agenda for the tutorial in advance because ...

1. We have only 55 minutes;
2. The tutorial is more effective if we focus on one or two concerns;
3. Students usually learn best when they take the initiative in the learning process.

Lower Order Concerns

- **Grammar**

What are the patterns of grammatical errors I tend to make?

- **Word choice**

What are the words I am using but uncertain about?

... Actually, there is a 24-7 teacher to help you with most of your lower order concerns.

Your 24-7 instructor:

A good dictionary!

- Tells you the part of speech of words
- Gives you examples of word usage
- Provides definitions, synonyms
- Provides usage notes
- Tells you whether words should be capitalized, hyphenated, etc.

Questions to ask yourself regarding grammar

What are my grammar questions?

- Can I find the answer in a good dictionary?

If not:

- What exactly is my grammar question? Can I write it down?
- Can I underline the parts I have questions about?

Bring your questions and your paper with underlined sections to your Writing Centre appointment.

We have covered ...

- What a writing tutorial is.
- What a tutor can help you with your writing process.
- Dos and don'ts.
- A five-topic agenda-generator.

We hope you have learned how to get more out of your Writing Centre tutorials!

For more help with writing ...

Visit our website at

<http://www.queensu.ca/writingcentre/>

Many students find our handouts tab particularly helpful:
(<http://www.queensu.ca/writingcentre/handouts/index.html>)

Also, check out “How to Write University Essays” at
<http://www.queensu.ca/writingcentre/How%20to%20Write%201st%20University%20Essay%202010.pdf>

