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UW20 NEWS & NOTES

How To!

Advice from the GWU Writing Faculty

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How to Start UW20 on the Right Foot!

*Every semester some students needlessly underperform in UW20. And not because they're ill-prepared or "bad writers." **Prof. Eric Drown** explains why this happens and what you can do to get the most out of UW20.*

In my view, students perform below their abilities because their expectations of what the course is meant to accomplish for them don't match the University's expectations of the course's functions.

Confronted with a course that's more challenging, less rule-bound, and less focused on grammar, style, and technique than expected, some students resign themselves to simply getting through the course with minimum effort. They not only risk having to retake the course, but also miss out on a major educational opportunity that the University values so highly that it's the only course that the University requires of every single first-year student.

Approaching UW20 with the right attitude is vital to making the most of the course. So let's dispel some myths about the course and offer you some success strategies.

One last thing before we get on with it: I'd love to hear what you think about all this. Please leave a comment by clicking on the link at the end of this post.

UW20 is not remedial. It's not the University's way to ensure that you can write competently or proficiently. It's the University's way to introduce you to the intellectual practices and communication conventions of an institution dedicated to creating new and productive knowledge. Think of UW20 as the University's way to invite you to become full participants in our most important mission.

UW20 does not teach "good" writing according to some arcane universal and timeless standards (like "concision" or "one-idea-per-paragraph"). Communities of people who create and use pieces of writing to do work establish local standards of what counts as "good" writing. "good" argument,

"good" style, "good" research, and so on. As you might expect, what counts as "good" in one locale might be deemed "bad" writing in another, depending on the needs, customs, and purposes of the local discourse community. Since UW20 is designed to introduce students to the ways of writing and the habits of mind of academics and public experts, you'll need to expect a class where the "rules" for writing well are contingent, flexible, and dependent on idea, audience, and purpose.

Accordingly, UW20 is not an extension of the kind of writing required of students in High School or other first-year University classes. The writing tasks assigned to you in UW20 are not simply longer, more complicated, and more intense than what you've done in HS and other first-year classes. In the main, they will be qualitatively and purposively different. In UW20 you're not just working on developing clear and logical expressions of ideas. More than any other course early in your GW career, this one asks you to think of yourself as an emerging scholar, capable of creating new knowledge. With this change come new standards, new motives for writing, new analytical and argumentation techniques, and new responsibilities to readers.

Our best advice: EMBRACE CHANGE!

Don't trust that what worked in HS will work to the same degree or at all in UW20. Expect that you'll probably have to change your beliefs about yourself as a writer, as well as about what writing is and does. You'll definitely have to change your work processes, and the standards by which you evaluate your achievement.

Change your self-image with regard to your role in UW20. When you think of yourself as an emerging scholar, not a first-year student learning a "skill," you'll expect more of yourself and see writing both as part of the way you learn something new, and the way you teach that new thing to other people in a way that enables them to do something with the knowledge.

Develop effective study methods for doing more than memorizing and reproducing facts or expert opinion. Ask your peers, professor, or librarian for help.

Expect more frequent, more complex, and more interrelated homework assignments, ones that will directly shape your abilities to do the major projects of the course. Poor work on the supporting assignments will make success on the larger assignments far more difficult.

4. Sometimes, it is good to work on just one section of the paper, for a couple of hours, and then return the next day, to work on another section (UW20 student, anonymously submitted).

3. You have many different sources for sources available to you, DON'T be afraid to use something other than the internet! (UW20 student, anonymously submitted).

2. Expect that your end-of-the-semester tasks will take longer than you think (**Prof. Drown**).

1. Don't revise when you're tired. You miss a lot of stuff. Instead, take a nap beforehand. It's better to say up a little later revising and not be tired because you took a nap than it is to rush through revisions while exhausted and get to bed early (UW20 student **Joanne George**).

Realize that grading will be more process/results-oriented and less related to amount of effort.

Develop a conviction that responsibility for passing the course rests primarily with you, although your instructor and your librarian are there to help you do your best.

Work on the course frequently, diligently, and consistently. Don't think you can fall behind by a couple of weeks and catch up in a marathon session the night before the paper is due. All you'll do is lose sleep, miss the deadline, and have to re-do the project.

Use office hours—early and often, and not just when you're experiencing problems.

Go along with the learning processes your professors have designed for you, even if you don't fully understand them (but do ask lots of questions to better comprehend what's being asked of you and why).

Try to do the tasks assigned at the level of complexity with which they're presented to you. Don't substitute what you know how to do from high school for what is being asked of you. Don't reduce "interpretive synthesis" to "compare and contrast" or "write a persuasive argument" to "have an opinion."

Expect revision to be more about testing and developing ideas, rather than simply correcting errors in style, grammar or working on clarity of expression. Revision will be ongoing throughout the writing process. Editing for grammar, style, and clarity will come at the end of the project.

Don't believe in the myth of writing as a talent. It's a craft—something that can be learned through practice and response. No one is inherently a "bad" writer. Everyone can improve their ability to communicate complex, interesting, and useful ideas more persuasively. But you have to work well and effectively at it.

Don't believe that "proper" writing instruction should focus primarily on skills, techniques, style or grammar. Because academic and expert public writing seeks to provide its communities with rich, productive, and transformative knowledge, time spent working on reading, interpretation, idea-development will enhance your writing.

Don't quit on the course when: a) it gets difficult, b) it gets confusing, c) the instruction you're getting doesn't match what you learned in other settings, d)

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Top Tips to Finish UW20 Strong!

Students and faculty give advice on how to finish those pesky end-of-the-semester projects.

13. Use the Writing Center!!!! (UW20 student **Ashley Dennee**).

12. Primary sources are your friends! (UW20 student **Alyson Corbett**).

11. When you find sources, capture the information. Write it down; print it out; "print to screen." Otherwise, you end up searching for an essay or a primary source for hours without any luck (UW20 student, anonymously submitted).

10. Sleep enough. Eat well. Minimize sugar intake. Avoid the Red Bull! Get some exercise (endorphins are stress-relieving). Have some fun--but not so much that you can't work the next day! (**Prof. Drown**).

9. Give your writing, revising, and final researching the time that it needs. Do a little bit every day (**Prof. Fruscione**).

8. Contact your professor and librarian. They can help you find valuable resources (UW20 student **Ashley Dennee**).

7. Instead of trying to write new material at the beginning of your writing session, try to start a period of writing/revising by rereading what you did during the previous session. This can be a helpful way of easing back in to the writing process, instead of hitting the ground running (**Prof. Fruscione**).

6. Be ruthless with yourself when it comes to revising. If material doesn't belong, it should be taken out.

5. Give yourself a physical and mental break--take a short walk, do some yoga, go for a jog, or something else to get you away from the computer for a bit (**Prof. Fruscione**).

you don't get the grade you wanted, e) you realize that you're going to have to change your approach to academic or expert public writing. Instead, get help—Fast. Form a study group, ask a peer for help, visit your librarian or professor.

Don't browse the internet, check your e-mail, update your Facebook page, tweet or text in class or while you're working on your UW20 homework. Recent scientific research shows that multitasking strongly disrupts learning, particularly the kind of complex analytical and logical operations you're setting out to learn in this class (http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/20070201/multitasking-hurts-learning). So while you might have been able to listen to music, chat with a friend, watch YouTube, do some algebra problems, and write your history report in HS, you're very likely to be sabotaging your chances of success if you apply the same strategies to your UW20 work.

Expect to work on UW20 outside of class, between 8 to 12 hours a week.

Expect to be pushed well beyond your current capacities–no matter what level of proficiency you bring to the course.

Go to class, every time.

Be well prepared for class, every time.

Do assigned work to the best of your aspirations, not to meet minimum expectations.

Participate fully and actively in every class.

- As Z asserts, "......" [Argument]
- Z claims that "......" [Argument]
- Z has clearly established that..... [Background fact]
- Z's concept of ..... is useful here. [Method]

Exhibit use of sources will be marked by language that signals your own interpretive voice:

- If we look closely, we can see .....
- While this could mean ....., it seems more likely to mean ....

Instancing is the trickiest. Any time you use a source to help establish the reason for you to write--and this often happens in the introduction--you are instancing. Note that these sources might also be serving another purpose simultaneously, **Background** fact or **Argument**, for example. Along these lines:

- Conventional wisdom holds that ..... [quoting/citing, say Wikipedia, or journalistic coverage, or a recent survey], but is this really the case? This essay will address.....
- Scholars tend to fall into two camps on the issue of ..... [quoting/citing academic sources representing these two camps]. But what they seem to be missing is ....., which this essay will explore.

The first **Instancing** template above is also establishing **Background**, and the second one is an **Argument** use. But both cases also work as instancing: establishing the reason for this writer to write, to fill some gap in our knowledge or to take an intellectual path overlooked. **Instancing** sources are critical to giving your reader a sense of what motivates you to write this essay in the way that you do, and a sense of why they might want to read it.

(fn1)This heuristic was first articulated in Joseph Bizup, "BEAM: A Rhetorical Vocabulary for Teaching Research-Based Writing," *Rhetoric Review* 27.1 (January 2008): 72-86. My colleague Mark Mullen and I have modified it somewhat and added the Instancing category.

(fn2)These moves are explained in Joseph Harris, *Rewriting: How To Do Things With Texts* (Logan: Utah State Univ. Press, 2006).

How to Generate Original Ideas: Even as an Emergent Scholar

The First Year Writing faculty strongly believe that UW20 students are emergent scholars. By this we mean that we see our student-colleagues as writers capable of producing ideas and insights that are worth reading because they are both original and situated in existing scholarship. Not surprisingly, one of emergent scholars' (of all ages!) greatest anxieties is the problem of how to come up with and develop original ideas that other scholars will find interesting and productive. In this post, Professors Mark Mullen and Robert Rubin offer shocking and useful advice to emergent scholars on how to generate original ideas. Try these strategies, then come back and leave a comment on how they worked for you!

Prof. Mullen writes:

"One goal of a lot of argument-driven writing, particularly that associated with academic work, is to offer new ideas, or at least new ways of looking at older concepts. Unfortunately, most of what we have rattling around in our heads represents the exact opposite: it's the prevailing wisdom, beliefs about the status quo, a finely tuned sense of what is acceptable. . .exactly the sort of thing that makes for tedious and pointless reading.

"This is a technique to help clear your head of the accumulated cultural dross about any given subject and focus on something that you might find worth saying and someone else might find worth reading. First, pick three ideas that you might like to write about for the particular essay that you are working on. Write a short paragraph for each that attempts to make an argument concerning that idea. Now take that piece of paper, roll it up into a tightly wadded ball, and throw it in the nearest trash can. The first three ideas you've come up with are more than likely the most obvious things that would have occurred to anyone writing about this topic and you have just voiced them and disposed of them in a way that won't tempt you to try and cajole them into some kind of thesis.

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methods—will likely constitute the bulk of your research essay. These are your most important "primary sources." Their genres will be determined by your central questions.

Argument sources are ones you draw on for key claims, concepts (with stipulated definitions), and theories you are using and responding to in your essay. In many fields, these will be considered your most important "secondary sources." Most of these will be academic sources (academic journal articles, books or book chapters, essays in anthologies, dissertations, master's theses, etc.), though important non-academic theorists may be more relevant to the question or problem you are addressing. Include here any works from which you are borrowing key concepts or theories, including those you are importing from another field or discipline. Your essay might be doing any combination of *forwarding* (applying, extending, revising) or *countering* (rebutting, refuting, delineating) these arguments (fn2).

Method sources are those you use for the methods they model, especially in cases where the method itself is unique, innovative, or particularly applicable to your project. For example, you might cite and describe a certain quantitative method, adapting it for your own purposes in your essay. You might also consider as "method" sources those from which you derive your own mode of questioning, way of thinking, or style of writing. Sources influential in these more subtle ways are sometimes noted in acknowledgements or epigraphs rather than citations.

I-BEAM is useful especially in the drafting stage. Ask a peer to mark I, B, E, A, or M next to each source quotation/citation, based on how he or she thinks you are using that source at that moment. See if she or he can tell what you thought you were doing (if you knew yet). Discuss to figure out exactly what role(s) that source is playing in your essay at that moment. This little exercise can help you figure out your own stances as well, e.g., whether you agree or disagree with a particular source's claim.

For example, if you are quoting from an academic article or book, are you are using that source (at that moment) for its **Argument** (one you plan to extend or respond to)? Or are you using it merely to establish some factual **Background** information that no one has any reason to question? There is a big difference in how you use the source, and how you signal your usage to readers.

Clearly marking your source uses with rhetorical cues will help your reader see the difference. For example, what differences can you infer about a writer's use of sources framed in these ways?

"Now list three completely new ideas. By this point you'll feel that you are getting a little stuck. You'll start putting down random stuff, ideas out of left field, ideas that don't seem as if they would ever have a snowball's chance in hell of making for a credible paper. . .and there's a good chance that at last you will have stumbled upon something interesting and worth writing about."

In a book he's currently working on, **Prof. Rubin** offers this advice:

"In business, successful creative teams often hold a brainstorming session where they bring people together and get them to start tossing out ideas—good, bad, and crazy. One person's crazy idea sparks someone else's good one, and so forth. If done right, everyone leaves their skepticism at the door and no one worries about saying anything stupid; ten people come into a meeting with ten ideas apiece, but instead of 10×10=100 ideas, brainstorming multiplies the effect; it's more like 10×10×10=1000. Statistically speaking, you're more likely to find a really good idea from a pool of 1,000 than 100.

"'Wait a minute!' you say. 'There aren't nine other people in the room with me trying to find a good idea. I'm all by myself!'

"Don't be so sure. You might like raunchy jokes, beautiful sunsets, bad puns, soap operas, chocolate, Mozart's concertos, Ultimate Frisbee, and hacking computers. You might like being sweet to children and being naughty when flirting during a date. But, when you sit down to write, typically you try to shut out all those other sides of your personality and just listen to the one that turns information into elegant sentences—the Editor, we'll call it.

"Sadly, the Editor lacks imagination. It knows to leave the hyphen out of *anal retentive* and to add it to *anal-retentive proofreading*. But don't ask your inner Editor to dream up a good Halloween costume—or a good paper topic, for that matter.

"When you're brainstorming, forget about that Editor! Write for yourself. Record as many specifics as possible. Don't worry about spelling or grammar. Explore as many avenues as your imagination opens up before you. Let all the different voices speak. Later, you can think about them more fully and turn them over to the Editor for cleanup.

"In this context, brainstorming doesn't mean sitting in front of a computer screen, racking your brain for something to write about. It means writing for yourself, when there's no one else looking, as a way of generating ideas. [snip...]

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How to Use Sources Effectively in Expert Writing

Prof. Philip Troutman says, "It's not how many sources you have, but how you USE them that counts!" Read on as Prof. Troutman explains a simple but effective way to think about using sources effectively in expert writing. He also offers sentence templates to help you signal these uses to readers.

Prof. Troutman says: "Having amassed a broad range of sources, emergent research-writers often find themselves a bit confused as to how to use them. I recommend using the I-BEAM (fn1) heuristic of sources to figure out what *work* you mean each source to do in *your* piece of writing. **I-BEAM** stands for Instancing, **B**ackground, **E**xhibit, **A**rgument, & **M**ethod."

Instancing is the use of sources to indicate the context and nature of the question, or even its very existence. These might be scholarly articles (e.g., demonstrating an ongoing dispute or consensus you find problematic). Or they might be journalistic or web-based items that simply point to or reflect some specific aspect of the problem. These constitutive sources will probably show up in your introduction, helping define your project in light of what has come before and establishing a context in which your reader can see the importance of your project. (Therefore, if you like, you can substitute the terms **I**nterest or **I**mport here, since these sources are establishing these qualities.)

Background source use is for facts or "objective" information. You expect your reader to simply trust these outright, so they must be widely accepted in your field as credible sources for facts and information. This is the least significant use of sources in a research essay; you might not even cite some of these if the facts are commonly known. But you should cite any kind of specialized encyclopedias or other repositories of knowledge.

Exhibit sources are those you analyze in your essay, ultimately for evidence to help you sustain your claims and deal with counter-claims. Your analysis of these sources—through detailed description, quantitative analysis, or other

"Try a variation of the old game of 'twenty questions' with your subject. The following technique, known as a *heuristic* (adapted from *Twenty Questions for the Writer*, by Jacqueline Berke), is a good way of learning something about your subject —'X'; it can be applied to everything from a paragraph to the entire essay. Ask the questions, and jot down answers quickly. When you get through, you'll have a list of ideas and thoughts to work into your finished writing.

1. What does X mean? (Definition)
2. What are the various features of X? (Description)
3. What are the component parts of X? (Simple Analysis)
4. How is X made or done? (Process Analysis)
5. How should X be made or done? (Directional Analysis)
6. What is the essential function of X? (Functional Analysis)
7. What are the causes of X? (Causal Analysis)
8. What are the consequences of X? (Causal Analysis)
9. What are the types of X? (Classification)
10. How is X like or unlike Y? (Comparison)
11. What is the present status of X? (Comparison)
12. What is the significance of X? (Interpretation)
13. What are the facts about X? (Reportage)
14. How did X happen? (Narration)
15. What kind of person or thing is X? (Characterization/Profile)
16. What is my personal response to X? (Reflection)
17. What is my memory of X? (Reminiscence)
18. What is the value of X? (Evaluation)
19. What are the essential points or features of X? (Summary)
20. What case can be made for or against X? (Persuasion)

Like Prof. Zink, Prof. Troutman urges you to get someone to help you analyze your draft, but has your interlocutor play a more active role. "Peer responses are key, since you can't always see what other readers will. But you must train your readers; otherwise they will probably focus only on grammar and spelling, and that's editing, not revision." Ask your peer to read the draft with any of the following purposes—borrowed from Peter Elbow's & Pat Belanoff's *Sharing & Responding*—in mind (only one at a time, though). After they've read your draft, ask them to:

A. Write a descriptive outline of the paper, two sentences for each paragraph in the paper: One sentence summarizing precisely what the paragraph says. One sentence describing what the paragraph *does* and *why*--what its role is at that moment in the paper (e.g., establishing other scholarly views, laying out the paper's agenda, presenting evidence, discussing a counter-claim, connecting two major sub-claims, speculating about possible implications of the claim, etc.). This lets you find out how your reader perceives not only all the things you are saying, but also why you are saying those things in the order you do. Does your reader see alternate ways to organize it? Do you, based on how he or she outlined it?

B. Restate your central claim, but only in the form of questions: E.g., *Okay, so are you trying to argue that …? or is it more about the question of …?*
This gives you the chance to reflect on your claims--and the question of whether your reader saw them as you intended--rather than simply to defend them. Your peer might even see a more interesting claim you *could* be making.

C. Believe everything about the draft: its central claim, its evidence, its use of scholars' work, its organization, its style, its word choices, its title, etc. Respond with ideas to further what is already going on with these things.

D. Doubt everything about the draft: its central claim, its evidence, its use of scholars' work, its organization, its style, its word choices, its title, etc. Respond with ideas for addressing the objections that arise out of this doubt.

Change your mindset about revision and try out some of these techniques. You're writing will be richer, smarter, more disciplined, and more interesting. You'll have learned more and so will have your readers!

Let us know what you think!

revisits writing in order to rethink its aims, how it works with material it interprets, how it develops ideas, etc.... *Revision* rethink[s] the ideas and examples that drive your thinking in an essay."

Prof. Troutman points out that "In *revising*, you are changing your mind, shifting your claim, anticipating new counter-claims, bringing in new evidence, re-ordering your major points; you are engaging your text, perhaps even struggling with it, wrestling it into a new shape. In *editing*, you are fixing your text, both in terms of correcting errors (syntax, citation format, etc.) and in terms of giving it final form (font choice, wordsmithing for style, etc.); you are now treating it like an object, a beautiful thing you can now show.

3. You need a functioning process for making revision systematic. This will probably vary according to your needs, but here are some suggestions. All of our experts suggest starting by analyzing your draft.

Prof. Zink advises beginning revision by "Figuring out where you are most stuck. Once you've identified this idea, section, passage, or even sentence, find someone who will listen to you--peer from the class, roommate, paramour, random-person-muttering-to-self-in-local-park, or professor--sit that person down in front of you, and talk about what the trouble is. Let that partner know all he or she has to do is listen. Explain what's not working and why you're confused and why all of this is giving you a terrific headache. Let the person nod obligingly as you stammer through your confusion. Chances are, in just a few minutes of talking about the issue out loud, you'll come to some degree of clarity and even a solution."

Prof. Ryder offers a three-step process: A. "Go through your draft and 'chunk' it--identify the *main sections* of the paper. Look at each big chunk and treat it like a mini-essay: Does it have a cohesive purpose? Will readers know what it's *doing* in the essay? How might you clarify the purpose and argument as you move into that section?

After analyzing your chunks (sounds gross I know!), **B. "Go through the draft and write answers to the following questions in the margins for *each paragraph*:** What is my main point? What is the purpose of this paragraph (is it making an argument, providing an illustration for something already said, introducing a new section of the paper, describing my method?).

C. Then look at the overall structure. Are things in the right order? Could sections be combined? Is there a logical progression? Finally, be critical about "flow." Anything can flow into anything else, but that doesn't mean it should. Can you describe the logic of why each part goes where it goes?

How to Make Key Rhetorical and Intellectual Moves in Expert Writing

In UW20 student-writers are asked to make complex intellectual, analytical, and rhetorical moves in their thinking and writing. Often our everyday language forms are not particularly well suited to such tasks as handling multiple perspectives at once, to forging connections between abstractions and examples, synthesizing ideas from a matrix of sources.

Fortunately, discourse communities (like disciplines, professions, and fields of study) develop specialized traditions of language used to do this kind of complex communicative work. Part of what UW20 students learn is how to recognize, appropriate, and revise these specialized language forms for their own expert writing situations.

The following post provides sample language templates developed by UW20 Professors Eric Drown and Rachel Riedner (inspired by and in dialogue with Graff's and Birkenstein's They Say/I Say) to handle some of the more frequently encountered rhetorical situations that will arise in argumentative writing.

Note: Some instructors may be concerned that such templates might stifle students' originality or do too much of the hard work of thinking for them. We disagree. Professor Drown agrees that "students should think for themselves, but I don't think these templates do the thinking for the students. I'm persuaded by my experience that these templates help students in the ways described by Birkenstein and Graff: which is to help them 'bring out aspects of their thought' that they wouldn't have recognized without the templates' prompt. I think these sentence-forms give order to student's ideas, invite students to question their beliefs, and to situate their ideas in relationship to the ideas of others. What the templates do is make key rhetorical moves available to students in way that enables them to develop their ideas in much the same ways more seasoned scholars do."

uses these templates in her UW20 classes not as formulas but as exercises to begin the writing process. The templates get students to recognize moves of academic writing and to make explicit how they're working with the writing of other authors. Professor Riedner stresses that as students develop their ideas and develop their own language, they should move beyond the templates.

Arguing for an approach to your material and setting up an argument (that will emerge in the paper). *These sentences could be worked into an introductory section of a research paper, helping you set up what the paper is doing, what your approach adds to existing knowledge on your subject, and why your approach is important. A strong argument makes a claim that requires analysis to support and evolve and offers some point about the significance of your evidence. It promotes thinking, prompts further questions and draws attention to specifics. It often tends to "push back" against a different view of the topic.*

Describing your topic: I am studying _____, in order to learn/explain _____, which is significant because _____. **NOT:** I'm "doing" X.

Justifying your approach: I approach [my material/object of study]____ [in this specific way] _____. My approach allows us to see evidence _____, prompting _____ further questions about _____ and drawing attention to _____. As a result, my work expands/challenges/argues against _____ view of evidence, and allows us to see _____ [that may have not been considered or understood before].

Developing your ideas and claims: *These strategies allow you to produce analysis and develop arguments based on your analysis. These strategies can help you work rigorously with your evidence, help you explain how you're interpreting it, how you're adding to existing analysis, how you're developing key ideas and concepts, how you're contributing to existing scholarship and knowledge on your subject.*

Complication: This explanation gets us ___ [only so far] ___ as we try to explain [whatever it is we're explaining]. ____ [Key pieces of evidence] ___ don't fit this explanation in ____ [this particular way] ___. Consequently, [Reformulate the argument in light of this]. Repeat.

Complication: Unfortunately, what I have just said is not enough to explain

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How to Revise (NOT JUST EDIT!)
Your Writing and Get Better Results

Every section of UW20 requires students to substantively revise between 25 and 30 pages of writing each semester. We place so much emphasis on revision because of our own experiences with using writing to begin to grasp dimly perceived ideas and to wrestle them into shape. Revision, the process of assessing, developing, and exploring ideas produced in generative drafts, is a crucial step in producing pieces of writing worth reading.

In this article First-Year Writing Professors Christy Zink, Rachel Riedner, Philip Troutman, and Phyllis Ryder teach you what you need to know to revise (NOT JUST EDIT!) like a pro!

1. It's crucial to make a mental adjustment and see revision as a *normal* **part of the writing process of even the best writers. Prof. Zink** tells her students to "let go of the deeply held notion that if you were a better, smarter, more adept, savvier, more intellectual writer you wouldn't have to revise so much. Just **Let. It. Go.** The most brilliant writers in the world are the ones who don't doubt for a moment that any piece worth anything is going to take rewriting. In fact, the better, smarter, more adept, savvier, more intellectual a writer you are, the more likely you are to build in time both for drafting and the craft of revision."

2. You need to make a distinction between *editing* **and** *revision*. Both **Prof. Riedner** and **Prof. Troutman** draw from the work of Joseph Harris (*Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*) to making clear the difference between *editing* and *revision*.

According to **Prof. Riedner,** "When you *edit*, you work at the surface level of a paper. You fix errors, tinker with sentences, and fine tune a document. *Editing* can improve the design and 'flow' of a document. *Revision*, on the other hand,

cultural, or civic settings, so too does what counts as "good research." As you get more familiar with the research practices of the communities of interest you seek to join, you'll feel more comfortable with the ways members of those communities construct their objects of study, organize matrices of data, create frameworks of meaning, and make knowledge-claims. But, as **Ms Gaspar** advises, "if you think of yourselves as engaged in a conversation with other writers interested in similar concerns, and observe the ways they do things, you'll quickly learn how to contribute to, extend, and even change the scholarly conversation."

Please, whether you're an emergent or experienced researcher, leave a comment or question derived from your own research experiences!

_____. To adequately understand _____, we'll have to consider _____. **Or,** The case isn't so simple, rather _____.

Querying key terms: [These key terms in my argument] __ need to be queried because _____. Having developed these terms, [reformulate the argument and retest against evidence analyzed in the new terms].

Considering argument as part of something larger: While it may appear that _____ are insignificant, when understood as _____, they [significance of new understanding].

Reformulate argument by refusing to go along with the conventional wisdom: Most commentators on _____ tend towards [their understanding] _____. If we consider it in [different] _____ terms, it becomes possible to generate such new insights as _____.

Clarification: Although it might appear that I am saying _____, I really mean _____. **Or,** Said another way, _____.

Definition/Redefinition: Although this term is usually understood in this [simple] way _____, in the context of my work it means this [more complex, nuanced, specific, specialized thing] _____. This more subtle meaning is important because _____.

Introducing and exiting a quote: According to X, a scholar of [source of authority], _____ [paraphrase of the larger argument of the quoted piece]. In " _____ title _____ " she writes: _____. What she means in the context of this paper is _____. If X is right about _____, then _[return to your own ideas considered in light of the quote or as a way to redirect the insights of the quote] _____.

Attributing Sources: According to X, _____. In historian X's view, _____. In "title of piece," essayist X argues that "_____."

Revealing an implication: [Following a discussion of specific details in a writer's piece] These details add up to the unstated assumption that _____. **Or,** Although X doesn't say so explicitly, she appears to mean that _____.

Revealing a questionable assumption: X's claim that _____ rests on the questionable assumption that _____.

Contextualizing a specific insight: [This specific thing I'm talking about] is best understood as part of ____ [this larger pattern] ____. **Or,** [This specific thing I'm talking about] is specific example of ____ [this larger pattern] ____. By seeing this thing in context, we discover that ____.

Specific insights confirm a more general claim: So as we can see from these aspects of ____, that X more generally tends to ____.

Moving from a general claim to a specific piece of support: [After making the general claim]. For instance, ____. To take a case in point, ____.

Representing the state of dialogue in a field: Such scholars as X and Y have argued recently that ____. This view stands as an important correction to that of Z who classically argued that ____. This shift has enabled the field to ____, producing a better understanding of ____. In light of my own research, ____.

Extending and developing a point of agreement: I agree that ____, and would even add ____. This extension of this idea is productive because ____.

Using summary of someone else's work to develop a point: In light of what I've been arguing, it's instructive to consider what X has to say about a similar topic: ____. As s/he argues ____. If X is right/wrong about ____, then my ideas ____[need to develop; should alter what X thinks...]____.

Allow a counter-argument to develop your point: Some people object that ____, I ____ [reformulate my point to ____. Although I concede ____ account for the apt criticism]____.

Conclusion
Getting at the significance of your work [NOT just summarizing what you've already said]: At stake in this argument is ____. **Or,** While most other scholars have argued ____, my work reveals ____. This new insight is significant because ____.

*Developed in response to Gerald Graff's and Cathy Birkenstein's work in _They Say/ I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing_ (NY: W. W. Norton, 2006).

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and look for links between different ideas. This will set you up to think about what you want to know or are curious about a subject. There's nothing wrong with Googling your topic to help you in this idea-generating phase. Just use the results list (and search suggestions) to see how the search and summary algorithms _connect_ words, ideas, examples, events, and people to one another and to see what your brain-based algorithms (intuition, insight) make of the material you've fished up."

Prof. Ryder's suggestions aim at helping emerging researchers understand what they're looking for and how to work with what they find. She says:

"Don't research just to find 'fact'; research to find arguments. While you might find some 'facts' useful for setting up the background of your essay, the real heart of your work will be to figure out the many ways people argue about the issue. It's rare to find two people who define the problem exactly the same way; fewer still define it the same way and recommend similar courses of action. More likely, you'll find that people disagree about what's going on, about whether what's going on is productive or harmful, about whether a solution fits the problem and so on. Look for the arguments and figure out how you can group them. Who is talking to whom about what part of the problem? Which part of this discussion will be most useful for you?

As you find some articles that really seem to speak to the question you've found, pause to read them. Write a "coming to terms" (_a la_ Joe Harris in _Rewriting_) identifying the overall purpose of the piece, how it develops, and what its uses and limits are. This kind of close reading and writing as you go will help you keep track of the conversation you're following. You can start seeing patterns; you'll start noticing when a lot of people agree on the same point and when there is disagreement.

On a real practical level: Sign up for a session on how to use _Refworks_ (the free citation manager GW libraries make available) and then use it to capture all the articles and books you think you might use. keeps track of what you found and where you found it, and will later format your bibliography for you. Using it from the start will save you time down the road."

Whether your research is in the humanities, social sciences, or sciences; whether you're seeking narrow answers to specific questions, opening broad new lines of inquiry, looking at familiar things in a new way, or clearing away previous wrong answers, research is a creative act of knowledge-making situated in the needs, habits, and interests of communities of interest. Just as what counts as "good writing" varies in different disciplinary, professional,

How to Get Started on Research as an Emergent Researcher

Most high schools and many college writing courses teach "Research" as a set of skills to be mastered, which can be applied to any "research problem." In the First Year Writing Program, we believe that research is a methodical, but organic and essentially thought-driven **process.** *Simply put "research" are the situational but rigorous strategies that intellectuals use* **to observe the world** *(be it in the form of text, human behavior, social structures, or natural phenomenon) and* **to develop defensible and productive knowledge-claims about it.** *The faculty believe that first-year students are not only ready to conduct real research on authentic problems, we believe that their findings, analyses, and interpretations are worth reading. The toughest problem for emergent researchers working to develop methodical but organic strategies for observing the world in particular research situations is knowing how to manage multiple new concepts, processes, and techniques at the same time as they are becoming experts in the subject and field of their project.*

In this post, **Professors Phyllis Ryder & Eric Drown,** *and librarians* **Dolsy Smith & Deborah Gaspar** *offer advice on how to get started on research as an emergent researcher. Please, whether you're an emergent or experienced researcher, leave a comment or question derived from your own research experiences.*

According to **Prof. Drown,** "emergent researchers have to embrace a substantive mind shift as they make the move from doing research assignments to rehearse research skills to conducting authentic research on open questions of active interest. In a 'research skills' approach, students are taught to answer questions definitively by seeking, evaluating, and presenting information. The work of the researcher is to collate, judge, and perhaps to recommend. In contrast, researchers working on authentic research problems have to *construct* objects of study, *figure out* the appropriate and meaningful questions to ask, *locate* scholarly communities of interest, *determine or invent* supple and reliable methods of observation and analysis, and *test their*

knowledge-claims for accuracy, sufficiency, and productivity in particular discourse communities. In this model, the researcher observes, explores, creates, interprets, forges connections, persuades, serves and participates in communities of interest."

This all sounds very complicated, but librarian **Dolsy Smith's** "very unlibrarian-like" approach to his research-work captures the spirit of an organically developing matrix of essentially curiosity-driven tasks that makes up a useful research process:

"Research never really begins (just as it never really ends). You 'start' your research by sorting through what you already know or think or wonder about a subject, from the assumptions and impressions you bring to it, from whatever in your experience has drawn you to this subject in the first place. But this is hardly a limitation. In fact, if you neglect this part of the process, you'll have a hard time identifying your own stake in the subject matter, by which I mean that once you start juggling what others have already said about it, you won't know what you yourself have to say.

I start my research in a very exploratory mood: I spend a lot of time poking around, indulging in free association, following various angles and leads, looking for the hook that will catch my interest. Often I hop from footnote to footnote until I hit on a text that allows me to think about the subject from an unexpected perspective or with a vocabulary that I'm not used to. This kind of text need not relate directly to the subject I'm researching; indeed, it can work better if it doesn't. That's because the point of research and argument is to introduce fresh points of view on [even] familiar subjects, and the most important arguments are those that draw connections between things that no one had considered relevant to each other before. "Relevance" is not given; for any particular subject, there is not a finite set of relevant sources waiting to be discovered. The task of the researcher is to *construct* the relevance of what she finds. Something I read makes me think of something else--I test out a connection--if it doesn't click, I have to be prepared to go back and look (and think) again. But the key components of research are reading and writing and thinking."

Follow **Mr. Smith's** advice and you'll end up developing the "sense of interest in and curiosity towards your subject" that librarian **Deborah Gaspar** says is a key trait of successful researchers. According to Ms Gaspar, you can create that sense of curiosity by using research skills that you already have. In early stages of the project, she advises, researchers should "do a kind of mental inventory-- ask yourself what you already know about your subject. Make a list of words