

Guidelines and Resources for Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing across the curriculum is anchored on the belief that writing is a primary method of learning in any discipline and should be implemented across all content areas throughout each student's education. Multiple studies have demonstrated that writing improves learning because it actively engages students in a deeper understanding of the content being studied as they gather information from a variety of sources and organize their thoughts. Studies have also shown that writing across the curriculum has many other benefits:

- Writing helps aid retention and leads to a much deeper understanding of the concepts and skills being addresses across any field of study.
- Writing helps students to think more strategically, more critically.
- Writing allows students greater independence to extend their thinking and to make critical connections across multiple disciplines.
- Writing provides teachers with a deeper understanding of the strengths and challenges each student is bringing to the learning process.

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<p>Writing across the curriculum applies to <i>writing to learn</i> and <i>writing in the discipline</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing to learn is based on the belief that writing is a primary method to enhance learning for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Written reactions to information received in class or through reading leads to deeper comprehension and better retention. ○ Written responses stimulate students to connect with what they are learning in class. ○ Frequent writing in multiple classes improves students' writing skills. ● Under writing to learn, written assignments are typically short and informal and can be performed either in or out of class (e.g., reading journals, summaries, response papers, learning logs, problem analyses, and more). ● Writing in the disciplines recognizes that each discipline has its own unique style, structure, and perhaps conventions. ● To participate in academic discourse in a specific discipline, students need to be taught discipline-specific writing requirements, e.g., quantitative reports, literature reviews, project proposals, lab reports, etc. ● Writing in the discipline is usually a more formal assignment than writing to learn activities; however, both practices combined effectively guide student thinking. 	<p>Purdue Owl on Writing Across the Curriculum</p> <p>National Writing Project on WAC</p> <p>Edutopia Writing to Learn</p> <p>The WAC Clearing House: Writing to Learn (Colorado State)</p> <p>The WAC Clearing House: Writing Across the Discipline (Colorado)</p>

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<p>Writing to Learn activities should serve several purposes in addition to laying the groundwork for Writing in the Disciplines. They also help students gain an increased understanding of new ideas as well as retain and apply those new concepts in different contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quick writes or one-minute papers are an excellent means for teachers to assess what students know and/or what they have learned from a lesson. They can be applied in a variety of ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quick writes can be used in preparation for a discussion and allows students to gather their thoughts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What do you know about the process of photosynthesis? ● What is the relationship between weight and gravity? ● What is a civil war? ○ Quick writes can ask students to recall important concepts from a lesson or evaluate what they have gleaned from it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What hinders photosynthesis? ● What are some of the causes of the American Civil War? ● What are three new things you learned today? ● What concepts are confusing from today's lesson? ○ Quick writes can take on many forms but one common example is the entrance/exit slip where students respond to a question as soon as they get to their seat at the beginning of class. Generally, the question or series of questions ask students to write about what they know regarding a topic of study for that day's lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For example, a social studies lesson about two prominent but ideologically different leaders in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States might have an entrance question such as, "Are there times when violence is acceptable? Please explain your response." ● After the initial question, a class discussion may briefly ensue and then transition into further study about violence in the face of oppression and injustice, including primary sources from the leaders themselves as well as other rich texts to study. ● An exit question might be, "How did Malcolm X and Dr. King differ in their stances toward acceptable violence?" 	<p>How to Use Writing in Your Classes to Improve Student Learning</p> <p>Quick Write/Quick Draw</p> <p>Quick Writes from Harvard</p> <p>One-Minute Papers</p> <p>Entrance/Exit Tickets from Brown</p> <p>Cornell Notes Template</p> <p>How to Use Cornell Notes</p> <p>Student Self-Assessment from Stanford</p> <p>Learning Log Sample</p> <p>Learning Logs and</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cornell notes are another way to help students organize what they are reading or what they are seeing and hearing in a written form. In this note taking system, students divide their page into three sections with a vertical line an inch in from the red margin line on lined paper and a horizontal line about three inches up from the bottom of the page. Students use the left side of the vertical line to list key points, the right side to write information about those points, and the bottom section is for a summary. ● Written self-assessments are a meaningful way for students to consider the work they have done and how they feel about it. Students may answer questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What went well with this assignment? ○ What was difficult? ○ What would you do differently if you had to do this over? ○ What parts of this assignment will demonstrate what you have learned? ● Response notebooks or journals and learning logs provide many significant writing to learn opportunities. They allow students to formulate and keep track of their ideas as they engage with the content. They are only effective if they are regularly used in the classroom and the teacher determines clear procedures for submission and evaluation of the notebook, journal or log. They can take on many forms. Note the following examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response notebooks or journals are often used to record ideas about newly learned information, to dialogue with teachers about what students understand and what they are still confused about, and allow students to consider questions they may still have about the topic of study. ○ Double-entry journals allow students to record their ideas as they are reading a text. In the left column, students summarize or record a specific passage from the text. In the right column, students write about the meaning of this passage and its relevance and significance to what they are studying. ○ Journals are often thought to be a product of language arts or social studies courses, but they can be a surprisingly effective tool in all courses, even mathematics classes. 	<p>Learning Journals</p> <p>Learning Logs Are Literacy Tools</p> <p>Response Journals</p> <p>Double-entry Journals with sample</p> <p>Double-entry Journals</p> <p>Weebly.com for class websites</p> <p>Wordpress.com for class websites</p> <p>Kidblog.org</p> <p>Edublogs.org</p> <p>Common Core Writing Rubric</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider that using journals in math requires students to write out and explain their thinking as they are solving math problems. Likewise, they are able to use the precise language of math as they record their ideas as well as reflect upon what they are and are not understanding about the math concepts they are studying. ○ Learning logs tend to be used more commonly in math and science classrooms (but they are easily adaptable to other courses of study) where students are asked to write out the steps to a lab procedure or the steps to solve a math problem. ○ The questions posed in journals need to be thoughtfully phrased and directly related to the content and classroom objectives. Likewise questions that ask students to reflect upon their learning should be regularly posed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What did I learn today? ● What do I understand? ● What do I find confusing? ● What questions do I still have? 	
<p>Writing in the disciplines is well served by a variety writing to learn activities to help students produce high- quality, discipline-specific work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing to learn activities provide the foundation for more formal writing in the discipline assignments. ● Rhetorical analysis of published articles or reports in the field of the discipline provide a means for students to engage with their structure and content, their purpose and their audience, etc. These publications should serve as discipline-specific models for writing in the discipline assignments. Students should consider and discuss or write about some of the following components of the publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The intended audience, ○ The content and context, ○ The purpose and effectiveness of headings and subheadings, ○ The art or graphics that may accompany the publication, ○ The choice of the salient quotes often highlighted within an article, 	<p>Writing to Learn in Social Studies</p> <p>Writing to Learn in Science</p> <p>Writing to Learn in Mathematics</p> <p>Writing to Learn in English/Language Arts The Reading Journal from Colorado State</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The structure of the publication, ○ The purpose of the introduction, ○ The connections of the substantiating arguments, claims, or evidence to the purpose of the publication, ○ The purpose of the concluding ideas, ○ The format of citations and the types of sources used. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discipline-specific assignments such as lab reports, circuit training plans, annual business reports, etc. should be approached sequentially. This can be accomplished by assigning tasks that build upon one another where teachers assign students to use their reading journal to record specific ideas and summaries of the articles they read. Students answer specific questions about the content of those articles in their reading journals such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do the articles say are the most common unhealthy eating habits of Americans? ○ What are good alternatives to those habits? Students use their summaries and answers as well as the articles as sources for an Op Ed piece or as substantiation for a designing specific eating plan aimed at improving energy or losing weight. ● Another sequencing option is where teachers chunk the parts of the assignment with a great deal of modeling and instruction and feedback for the different segments. If the introduction to a lab is supposed to contain specific components, for example, then teachers should provide samples of lab report introductions for students. In small a groups or as a whole class, the introduction should be studied and discussed. Students should either identify the parts of a lab report introduction in the model after they have been taught what they are, or they can study a few samples or determine what seem to be the essential parts of the lab report introduction. Students should write their own introductions and teachers should provide feedback before students proceed to the next step in the assignment. ● Feedback should consist of much more than editing punctuation and grammar. Feedback is most productive when it addresses the clarity, development, and arrangement of ideas in writing. 	<p>Doing a Rhetorical Analysis of a Text</p> <p>What is Rhetorical Analysis- Video</p> <p>Rhetorical Analysis</p> <p>Responding to Student Writing</p> <p>Create a New Rubric</p> <p>Rubrics Library for Teachers</p> <p>Improving the Research Essay</p>

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	<p>Providing useful comments will help students know how to improve their writing. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “This idea needs additional development. Can you provide another example to support it?” ○ “Please clarify how this quote relates to your purpose.” ○ “This section may be more effective if it is moved to _____.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Always provide a rubric or a check sheet for students detailing expectations for a high quality product. Review the rubric with them and have them use it to evaluate samples of the discipline-specific writing assignment, especially if it is the first time they have been ask to write a lab report or a literature review, etc. ● Ask students to use the rubric as they peer edit each other’s work in whatever stage of the project they happen to be in. This is time saving for the teacher and instructive for the students. 	
<p>Writing practices, activities and assignments need to be well planned and meaningful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meaningful “low-stakes” reading and writing activities allow students to be more engaged in active and independent thinking and provide more opportunity for students to respond to queries and classroom discussions. ● Students are more apt to respond if the pressure of evaluating their writing is removed and the focus is centered on the meaning of what they have written. ● Teachers need to make certain that what they are asking students to write allows students to successfully meet the learning objectives for the course of study. ● The texts or text sets teachers choose for students to read as part of the writing process should be relevant, engaging, and rich in their content. ● Likewise, when a meaningful writing assignment stretches over a longer period of time with ample and repeated writing activities and exploration of rich texts imbedded in that time, student learning is greater. ● Reflective and/or metacognitive prompts where students are asked to read a text and then reflect and write about what they know, what they find confusing, what they have learned, etc., provide for students a deeper understanding of new concepts. 	<p>Examples of Writing to Learn Activities</p> <p>Writing to Learn Activities and Student Accountability</p> <p>Creating Text Sets</p> <p>Guide to Creating Text Sets</p> <p>Sample Metacognitive Log Prompts</p> <p>Say, Ask, Check: Metacognitive Prompts</p>

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<p>Close reading of text is an essential part of writing about it. Close reading involves multiple readings of a short piece of high-quality text over multiple lessons. This practice is for all students in all content areas, even those who struggle with reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being able to closely read a text will help students have more material to write about as well as allow them to engage with models for writing well. Teachers can implement the following practices to help students practice close reading: ● Have students read the selected text independently. Direct students to write notes as they read (using cognitive markers, writing on post-its, etc.). ● Ask the students to listen while others (teacher or students) read aloud. ● Have students answer text dependent questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on specific vocabulary words found in context. ○ Concentrate on key passages that require students to return to the text for evidenced-based answers. ○ It is important for students to reflect on what they are reading, but in the context of what the author is saying. Maintaining evidence-based responses takes some practice, but will transform students into more critical readers and thinkers. ○ Investigate specific complex sentences for deeper interpretation--Why did the author write the sentence that specific way? How does the meaning change if a sentence is reordered or a word is replaced with a synonym? ● Involve students in small group and class discussions anchored on the selected text. ● Revisit the text through specific filters (e.g., form, tone, imagery, rhetorical devices). ● Summarize the main take-away points in the text as a class or in small groups. ● Provide opportunities for students to critique the author's reasoning and choices. ● Assign worthwhile, culminating writing activities about the text, requiring students to cite from the text within the body of their compositions (blogs, essays, letters, etc.). 	<p>A Primer on Close Reading of a Text (Intro Link to Primer)</p> <p>Close Reading Video on "Letter to a Birmingham Jail"</p> <p>Close Reading Exemplars and the Common Core</p>
<p>Argumentative writing is an important part of writing to learn in all content areas and the Common Core</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making a thoughtful, substantiated argument is at the core of critical thinking and is an important skill for students to practice in all content areas. Writing to learn activities challenge students to think more critically, and argument writing is a means by which they can apply that critical thinking to paper. 	<p>Argumentative Essay Description from Purdue</p>

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<p>standards for ELA, Science, Social Studies and other technical subjects require that students write arguments in these content areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The CCSS asks that students write arguments “focused on discipline-specific content” in which they do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish an evidence-based claim (or claims) that includes the significance of the claim and how it differs from other claims on the same topic. ○ Organize the writing piece so that it moves logically from the claim to addressing the counterclaims and the reasons and evidence that both refute the counterclaims and substantiate the paper’s claim. ○ Consider and address the audience’s previous knowledge about the subject of the argument as well as possible concerns and biases related to it, ○ Use language that provides cohesion as it connects the significant sections of the paper and establishes the relationships between <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the paper’s claim(s) and reasons, ● between the reasons and the subsequent evidence, ● between the claim(s) and the counterclaims. ● Students need to have the opportunity to analyze arguments in written texts regularly so that they are better able to recognize the components of a good argument and recognize a poor one. Teachers need to model how to do this with the class and then allow students to work in small groups and individually. Students need to share what they discovered. ● Use a cross-curricular focus to ignite students’ thinking about topics they are studying in other classes. Working in tandem with these other classes provides a rich experience for students in building arguments. ● Do not underestimate the power of speaking and listening in preparing an argument. Many students need the opportunity to think out loud and to hear what their peers think about debatable issues. This practice helps students refine their own ideas and distinguish their positions from their peers. It also provides a wider audience for students. Learning is limited when every argument students produce is only shared with the teacher. 	<p>Argumentative Writing Resources</p> <p>In Common: Effective Writing for All Students (hundreds of student samples)</p> <p>Analyzing and Evaluating Arguments-- Slideshare</p> <p>Critical Thinking: How to Read and Analyze Arguments-PowerPoint</p>

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<p>Structure matters in argumentative essay writing just as much as the ideas and the word choice. The thesis or position of the author indicates the structure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There are a variety of ways to structure an argumentative essay, but all should begin with an introduction that conveys the relevance of the topic and ends with a clear thesis that states the author's claim, or position. ● The body of the argument may proceed in a variety of ways. Consider the following components found in the body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The data or evidence from reputable sources that supports that claim. ○ The warrant or explanation of how the data supports the claim (usually 2 to 3 sentences). ○ The counterclaim or counterpoint, which should be a logical argument against the author's position. ○ The rebuttal or refutation of the counterclaim, supported by data and analysis that disproves the counterclaim. ● The full structure of the body has many additional possibilities including the previous suggestions, and not limited to the following suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Three paragraphs addressing and refuting one counterpoint each to the claim made in the thesis. This strategy appeases the opposing view before further developing the paper's position. Then would follow three substantiated points in three separate paragraphs that argue for the position stated in the thesis. ○ There is a more clustered approach where students will make the case for the claim in the first body paragraphs by first including a point supporting the claim and its evidence, then a counterpoint and its evidence. This same pattern proceeds for the next paragraphs. The last paragraph of the body consists of the author's rebuttal, which is the refutation of each of the counterpoints individually. ○ The body may consist of a point and its evidence, then a counterpoint and its evidence, and the author's rebuttal, repeated for as many paragraphs and points as are appealing to the writer in making a cogent argument for the paper's position. ● The conclusion should include a restatement of the claim made in the thesis and a summary of the main points of the essay. 	<p>Introductions, Body Paragraphs, Conclusions for Argumentative Writing</p> <p>4 Types of Essays for Social Studies (including tips and structure for arguments)</p> <p>How to Write an Argumentative Essay- Three sample structures</p> <p>Purdue OWL: Argumentative Essays</p> <p>Common Core; Teaching Argument and Informational Paragraph Writing</p> <p>Argument- The Writing Center - a thorough definition of the components of an argument</p>

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<p>The structure of an argumentative extended response varies slightly from an essay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An extended response that might be included on an essay test, for example, or used as a short, written reaction to a video or article about a current, debatable issue within an academic discipline. ● Providing a clear prompt or question provides focus for the students. For example, “In an extended essay response, answer one of the following questions: Is civil-disobedience morally correct?” or “Can individuals make an impact to counteract the effects of global warming?” ● In an extended essay response, students should answer the question in the first sentence and then expound upon their answer by developing points and refuting counterpoints. The final sentence should be a restatement of the first. 	
<p>The topic matters in argument or position essays. There has to be more than one side of an issue in order to take a position on it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The topic should be relevant, meaningful, and multi-faceted. An argument for who should have won the last season of <i>The Bachelor</i> is not as meaningful as an argument that explores the effects of a longer school day. ● The topic and direction of the paper is laid out in the thesis statement. Thesis statements should be derived from a research question and state the position of the writer in the form of a claim of policy, fact, value, definition, or cause. Following are example research questions from these categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are video games good or bad? (value) ○ How can human trafficking be stopped? (policy) ○ Does homework improve students’ test scores? (fact) ○ What is education? (definition) ○ What causes people to spend money rather than save it? (cause) ● Thesis statements should be properly narrowed, clear, and concise while stating the claim and the counter claim to be address in the essay. Consider the following two thesis statements that respond to the research question <i>Does homework improve students’ test scores? (fact)</i> Both address the topic and state a position, but the second includes counter points to be addressed and developed in the paper. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “There is no correlation between the amount of homework students complete each night and 	<p>150 Argument Essay Topics for Science</p> <p>Argumentative Writing Prompts from the Civil Rights Movement</p> <p>100 Argument or Position Essay Topics with Sample Essays</p>

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	<p>their performance on tests; therefore, if tests measure learning, students should not be given homework.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Homework does not yield higher test scores, and too much homework actually affects students’ ability to get enough sleep or participate in extracurricular activities.” 	
<p>There are some key best practices that help all writing to learn activities as well as more formal argument writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a safe nurturing environment in your classroom, as it will always yield better work and more sharing amongst students. Consider how you arrange the desks or tables, how you model giving feedback, and how you redirect students who are unkind in their remarks or behavior. All affect the sense of safety to share in a group. ● Provide students with clear directions that are not only orally spoken, but written and easily accessible. ● Examine models of the types of writing you are asking students to complete. Using those samples, discuss what to do and not to do in writing. ● Teach students to summarize what they are reading and allow them time to practice this skill. It will yield precision in identifying main ideas and concision in their writing. ● As you go through students’ work, keep a running list of what they are struggling with collectively and individually. Review those concepts with the class and allow for clarifying questions and practice of the concepts. ● Allow for multiple drafts for formal writing assignments. Give students the option to rewrite as many drafts as is reasonable until they master the concept. 	<p>Evidence-based Practices for Teaching Writing</p>

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