Introduction to College Writing

Professor Tyagi
Writers' Centre

One-on-one Consultations
Sign up using our scheduling system!
Academic Writing Workshops

Introduction to College Writing

The PowerPoint slides (with audio recordings) and supplementary materials from the workshop can be found [here](#).
Workshop agenda

- Opening discussion (≈10 mins)
- Sample college essay analysis (≈20 mins)
- 10-step essay writing guide (≈20 mins)
Opening discussion

With the people at your table, discuss:

- If you had to describe what college writing is, how would you do it?
- What concerns, or questions, do you have about college writing?
Differences between CC courses

- MOST MACRO
- MOST MICRO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSI</th>
<th>PPT</th>
<th>LH</th>
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<td>Big-picture</td>
<td>Medium-scale</td>
<td>Detail-oriented</td>
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## Differences between CC courses

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*CSI: Summarize main ideas cutting across entire paragraphs*

*PPT: Examine relationship between the sentences within a paragraph*

*LH: Scrutinize specific words, or even punctuation*
Similarities between CC courses

Writing process:

Brainstorming → Drafting → Proofreading
Similarities between CC courses

Essay components:

INTRODUCTION
Contains thesis statement, indicating what essay will argue.
Similarities between CC courses

Essay components:

BODY PARAGRAPHS

Each includes one main sub-point supporting the overall essay argument.
Similarities between CC courses

Essay components:

CONCLUSION

Recaps what the essay covered, sometimes outlining wider implications of the argument.
Sample college essay

As you read, consider:

- Is the thesis statement easy to locate in the introduction?

- Does each body paragraph’s topic, or first, sentence capture that paragraph’s one main point accurately?

- How effectively does the conclusion broaden out to investigate the argument’s wider implications?
Sample college essay

With the people at your table, discuss:

- What grade would you give this essay, based on the rubric?
10-step essay writing guide

Step 1

Read the prompt carefully.

Sounds obvious, but students often skip over important information in the prompt regarding essay length, formatting, and acceptable topics to write about.
It’s also important to take note of the action words in the prompt, such as “compare,” “analyze,” or “provide examples,” because those action words usually indicate the tasks to be completed.
10-step essay writing guide

Step 2

Set aside specific times to work on the essay.

Look at your schedule between the date you receive the prompt and the date the essay is due, and open up free time slots for the assignment between the two dates, taking into account your other commitments.
10-step essay writing guide

When scheduling time, it’s helpful to split one essay into several separate time blocks, such as:

1 hour for brainstorming on Monday,
2 hours for writing on Tuesday,
and 1 hour for editing and proofreading on Wednesday.

It may not be productive to try finishing an entire essay in one sitting.
10-step essay writing guide

Step 3

Narrow down an essay topic.

If the essay prompt gives you a range of possible topics to write about, and it’s not obvious which topic you’re most interested in, brainstorming a list of points you could make for each option might help you figure out which topic gives you the most to say.
Brainstorming

“The most important writing lesson I learned during freshman year was actually not about the craft of writing per se, but the preparation for its process—that is, the thinking that precedes pen to paper.

I found that one of the most useful strategies was to have a conversation about what I thought I might write an essay about with a friend to tease out which bits made logical sense (communicating a stream of thoughts out loud naturally helps organize internal muddling). Only after giving an idea serious thought and re-reading passages as necessary did I begin to actually write.”

— M, Class of ’20
Brainstorming

“Some students don’t realize that your mind doesn’t structure essays overnight. That’s why it’s important to attend office hours as early as possible, as these sessions will mostly consist of a back-and-forth between you and your professor in order to brainstorm essay ideas.

After that initial meeting, you won’t realize it, but your mind will be actively thinking of ways to flesh out the discussed ideas, and eventually this will help you decide on one to pursue.

Thereafter, your prof can help you structure these ideas in a way that makes sense. This is to say that you shouldn’t be scared of scheduling multiple meetings with your profs at every stage of the writing process (it shows initiative).”

— S, Class of ’21
Step 4

Create a rough essay outline.

This essay skeleton will vary depending on the course you’re writing for, and you might change the order of individual sections of it as you write, but having the overall Introduction —> Body Paragraphs —> Conclusion structure mapped out will help you arrange your ideas within it.
Sample LH1 essay outline

Introduction

Body paragraph 1

Body paragraph 2

Body paragraph 3, etc.

Conclusion
Introduction

- Hook
- Thesis statement
- Roadmap
Body Paragraph

Topic sentence

One main point
Conclusion

Essay recap

Wider implications
Sample CSI essay outline

Introduction

Background

Body paragraph 1

Body paragraph 2

Body paragraph 3, etc.

Conclusion
Sample PPT1 Essay 2 Outline

Introduction

Body paragraph 1 (= Premise 1)

Body paragraph 2 (= Premise 2)

Body paragraph 3 (= Philosopher’s conclusion)

Body paragraph 4 (= Objection)

Body paragraph 5 (= Response to objection)

Conclusion
Create a rough essay outline.

This essay skeleton will vary depending on the course you’re writing for, and you might change the order of individual sections of it as you write, but having the overall Introduction —→ Body Paragraphs —→ Conclusion structure mapped out will help you arrange your ideas within it.
Step 5

Develop your argument by drafting your thesis statement.

“In this essay, I argue that . . .” and then write what unique perspective you will offer on the texts you are examining in the essay. You may need to keep updating this thesis statement as the essay draft evolves.
Step 6

Write one topic sentence for each of the main points you want to make in the essay body.

Confirm that each topic sentence relates back to the thesis, and arrange the topic sentences such that the order of their attached paragraphs will “flow.”
Step 7

Fill in the rest of the introduction around the thesis statement, the rest of the body paragraphs after each topic sentence, and draft the conclusion.

Improve the clarity of your writing by ensuring that each individual sentence makes only one main point, just as each body paragraph should make no more than one main point.
Step 8

Cite your sources.

Essays often will not require you to refer to any sources beyond the primary text, such as the *Ramayana*. However, this primary text should still be cited according to the rules of MLA, Chicago, or any other official citation style.
Notes and Bibliography: Sample Citations

Go to Author-Date: Sample Citations

The following examples illustrate the notes and bibliography system. Sample notes show full citations followed by shortened citations for the same sources. Sample bibliography entries follow the notes. For more details and many more examples, see chapter 14 of The Chicago Manual of Style. For examples of the same citations using the author-date system, follow the Author-Date link above.

**Book**

**Notes**


**Shortened notes**


**Bibliography entries (in alphabetical order)**


For many more examples, covering virtually every type of book, see 14.100-163 in The Chicago Manual of Style.

**Chapter or other part of an edited book**

In a note, cite specific pages. In the bibliography, include the page range for
MLA Formatting and Style Guide

The following overview should help you better understand how to cite sources using MLA eighth edition, including the list of works cited and in-text citations.

Cite your source automatically in MLA

| Website | Search by URL, title, or keyword |

Using citation machines responsibly

Please use the example at the bottom of this page to cite the Purdue OWL in MLA. See also our MLA videocast series on the Purdue OWL YouTube Channel.

Creating a Works Cited list using the eighth edition

MLA is a style of documentation based on a general methodology that may be applied to many different types of writing. Since texts have become increasingly mobile, and the same document may often be found in several different sources, following a set of rigid rules no longer suffices.

Thus, the current system is based on a few guiding principles, rather than an extensive list of specific rules. While
In conclusion, romantic poetry is characterized by the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth 263).

Works Cited

The poem’s persona goes for a walk. “I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o’er vales and hills” (Wordsworth 263). He then sees some daffodils, a sight that fills him with pleasure. ✗

The poem’s persona goes for a walk, wandering “lonely as a cloud” (Wordsworth 263). He then sees some daffodils, a sight that fills him with pleasure. ✓
Citing sources

“The one most important lesson I learnt was to take what the text is giving you and format it into an essay.

An essay that focuses on the text and explores it well is better than an essay that tries to go beyond the text in search of some wider, general truth.”

— D, Class of ’22
Citing sources

“Coming from high school where toward the end it’s all about Increase The Number of Your Sources to Boost Your Bibliography, LH and PPT were a culture shock of—oh, I just need to use this one text and really wring it for all the insight I can get from it.

Which is on the one hand. On the other hand is CSI, which does encourage reading widely and skimming abstracts before reading the whole paper, and never reading quite as in-depth as LH or PPT.

So I think learning to drop the habit of source-hunting just to fluff up a paper was good to kick early.

When papers called for sources later on (final LH/PPT papers, MST final paper, SI papers), I was more deliberate with adding sources than before!”

— S, Class of ’20
10-step essay writing guide

Step 9

Show your essay draft to someone.

Talking about your draft with your professor in office hours, or with a peer tutor at the Writers’ Centre, can help you consider the points you’re making from fresh perspectives, increasing the overall sophistication of your argument.
Step 10

Proofread your essay carefully before submission.

Even the best writing can be undercut by typos. Reading your essay aloud can help you catch them, as can magnifying the font, or running the cursor along each line as you scan it.
Writers’ Centre essay resources

On this page, you will find a range of writing aids. You can narrow your search using the drop-down menu below.

Some of the materials have been created by Yale-NUS faculty and peer tutors. Others are materials from writing programmes at other colleges that we have found especially helpful. You will find many of these handouts in hard copy in the Writers’ Centre. You can also ask peer tutors for recommendations when you come for a tutoring session.

The Writers’ Centre also has a library of books available for borrowing. They can be checked out from the Programme Manager. There are multiple copies of academic writing guides like They Say, I Say and The Craft of Research, creative writing handbooks, and books by authors who have visited Yale-NUS.

A note on the Yale-NUS materials: The Faculty-generated materials are the result of many years’ experience of teaching and assessing written assignments. When a Faculty member finds that he/ she is writing similar comments on different student papers, he/ she often decides to create a handout on it to broadcast the message more widely. The Student-generated materials are composed by Peer Writing Tutors working with specialist Faculty. They respond to specific disciplinary writing challenges that students face in their assignments at Yale-NUS. These materials do not claim to represent an official college position on writing style and convention; they are not necessarily underpinned by any particular pedagogical creed; and they do not all speak with one voice on the same issue. Nevertheless, they speak from a breadth of experience, and we are sure that you will pick up several useful tips if you take some time to browse.

Choose a category: All

A Brief Guide to the Elements of the Academic Essay (Gordon Harvey, Harvard University)

Argument Revision: Creating a Reverse Outline (Karin Gosselin - Faculty)
Sample Common Curriculum essays

LH1 Sample Essay 3 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)
LH1 Sample Essay 4 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)
LH1 Sample Essay 5 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)
PPT1 Model Paper 1 (Malcolm Keating – Faculty)
PPT1 Model Paper 2 (Malcolm Keating – Faculty)
PPT1 Model Paper 3 (Malcolm Keating – Faculty)
Sample Essay 1 for Philosophy & Political Thought 1 (Bryan Van Norden – Faculty)
Sample Paper for Philosophy & Political Thought 1 (Neil Mehta)

Some Matters of Style: Some Suggestions for Writing in PPT and Philosophy (Matthew Walker – Faculty)
Some Thoughts on Writing an Evaluative PPT Essay (Matthew Walker – Faculty)
The Art of Close Reading (Lawrence Ypil – Faculty)
Sample Common Curriculum essays

Some Thoughts on Writing an Evaluative PPT Essay (Matthew Walker – Faculty)

The Art of Close Reading (Lawrence Ypil – Faculty)

Visual Analysis – A Quick Guide (Chrystal Ho – Peer Tutor)

Writing a Great CSI Essay (Anju Paul – Faculty)
Sample Common Curriculum essays

Close Reading Literature (LH2 Team – Faculty)
Close Reading Visual Art (LH2 Team – Faculty)
How to Write a Comparative Analysis (Harvard University)

LH1 Sample Essay 1 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)
LH1 Sample Essay 2 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)
LH1 Sample Essay 3 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)
LH1 Sample Essay 4 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)
LH1 Sample Essay 5 (Ila Tyagi – Faculty)

PPT1 Model Paper 1 (Malcolm Keating – Faculty)
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Workshop feedback