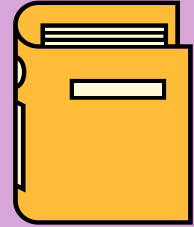


“WHERE DO I START?”

Acclimating to College-Level Writing Expectations



S



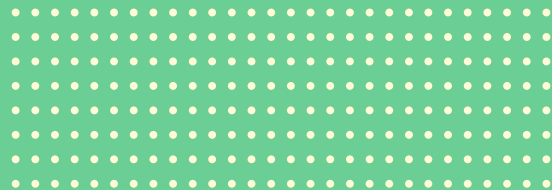
Welcome to the WC!

We're Berret and Elliot, and we are here to help you adjust to (perhaps overwhelming) college-level writing expectations 😊



More Resources:

Go to bit.ly/oxywc to learn more about us, view our hours, and get more writing help!



What does the Writing Center do?

- We are here to help any writer, any level, any stage, any task, any discipline!
- Students can work 1:1 with a Peer Writing Adviser or Faculty Specialist
- Drop in anytime! 4–10pm, Sunday–Thursday

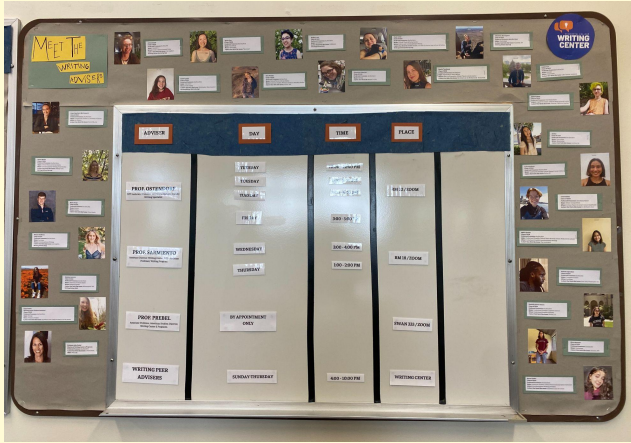


TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

The Process

Thinking about writing as a cyclical social practice

02

The Prompt

Tips for approaching and unpacking prompts

03

The Thesis

A guide to a "PASS"-ing main argument

04

The Intro

Building the first paragraph of your paper



THE PROCESS

01

Writing About Writing

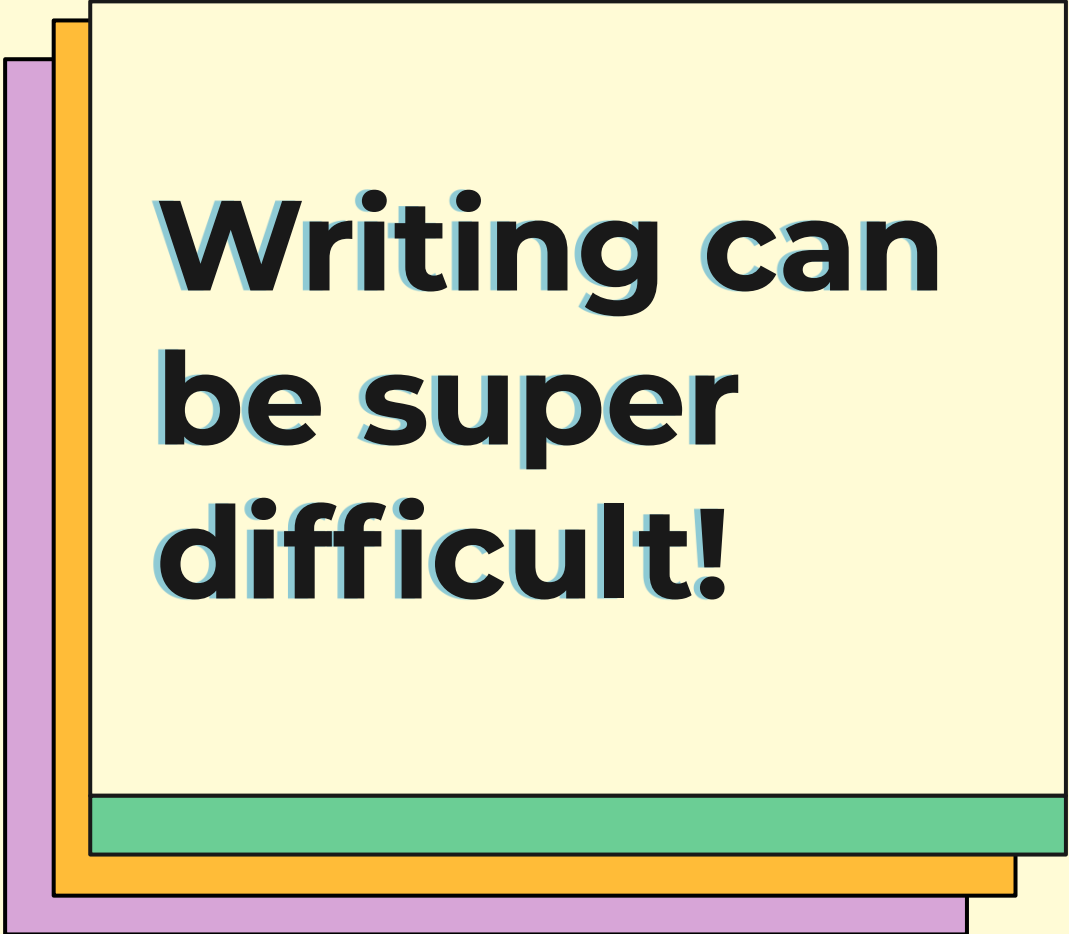
Activity: Quick freewrite (or freethink)

Goal: To break the ice **Time:** About 3 min

Describe how you feel about writing

Jot down or **think** about how you view writing in
general, any worries you have about writing for
college, questions you have about expectations,
what your writing process looks like, etc.





**Writing can
be super
difficult!**

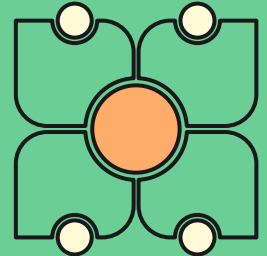
Writing as a Process

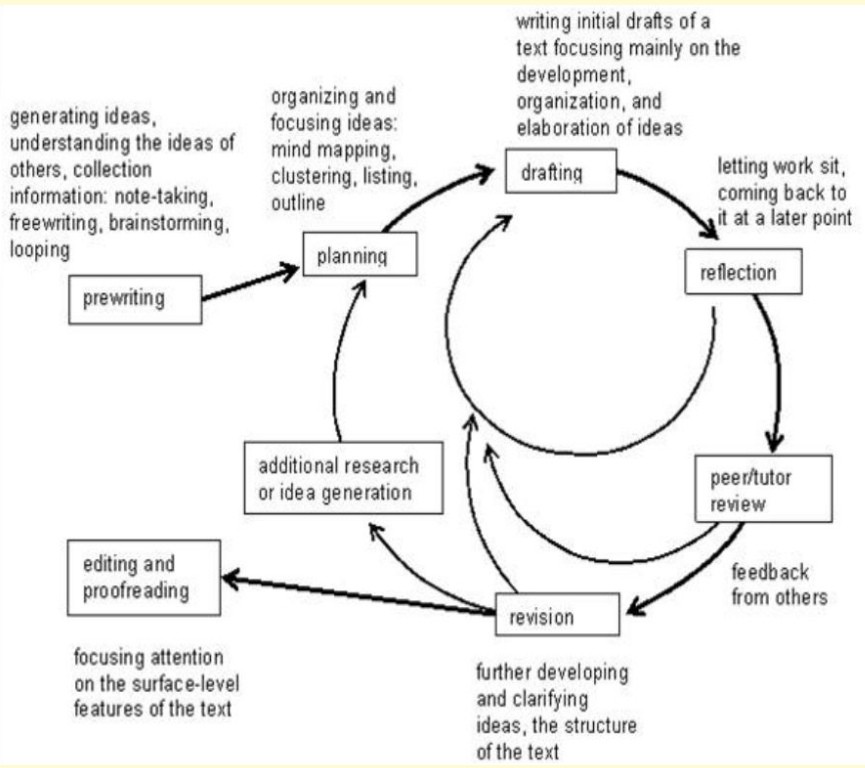
Writing is a mode of **discovery** and what we call a **recursive process**:

- We can **explore**, **test**, and **refine** ideas while finding the most effective way to say them
- Stages can feed into one another **nonlinearly**
- **New ideas** can arise, and old ones may adapt or no longer fit

★ Writing is not a one-way activity, and there is no one way to approach writing! ★

But our job is to help you identify what feels best for you.





Writing as a Recursive Process

Irvin, L. (2016). "A Word or Two in the Writing Process."



Writing as a Social Practice

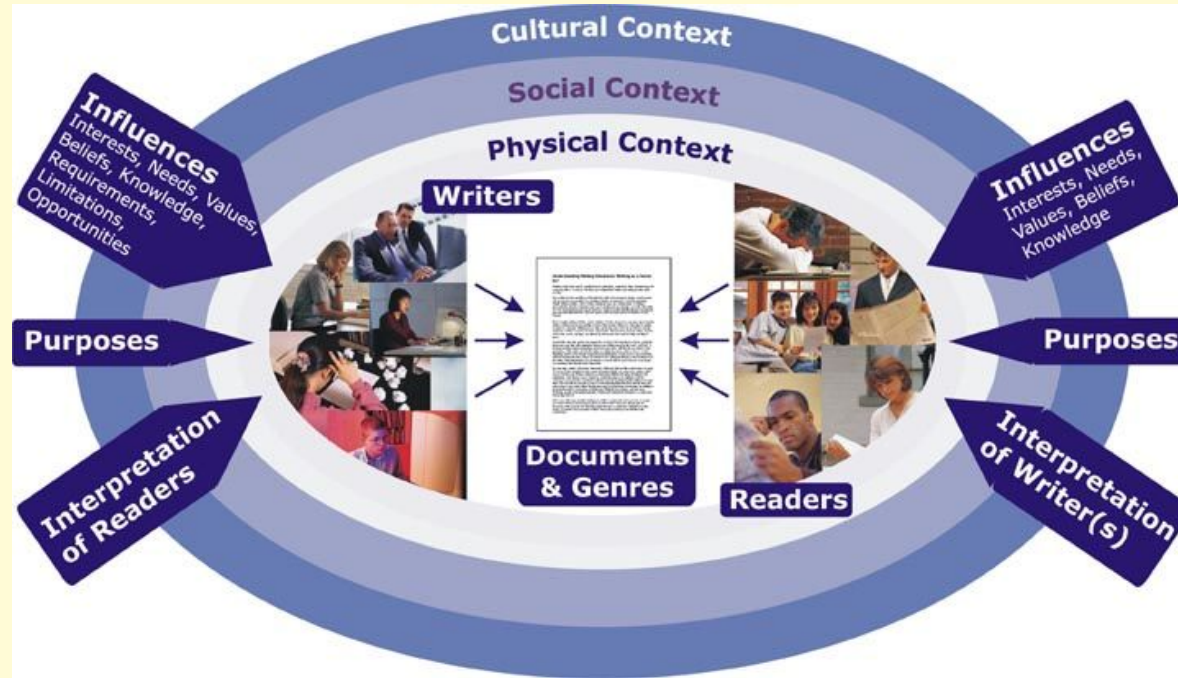
Because it is a way of communicating information from person to person, writing is inherently **social**

- a) You don't need to lock yourself alone in a room to write*
- b) Negotiating the author-audience relationship is a priority

*But you can if you want!

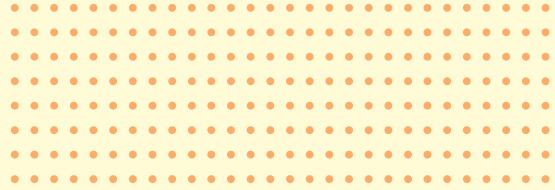


Writing as a Social Practice



"A Social Model of Writing." Writing@CSU. 2010. [Web](#).

(UNPACKING) THE PROMPT



02

When planning an essay...

BE SURE TO ANSWER THE PROMPT!

Revisit the **prompt** and reevaluate while **outlining** and ask: *Am I fully and clearly responding to what's being asked?*

BE SPECIFIC!

Responding to a prompt in away that is too **general**, or not **grounded in source material** can result in an essay whose argument is not **fully-formed** or **distinct**.



KEY TERMS

Identify the type of paper based on common words

COMPARE



evaluate, contrast, balance

- Look for differences and similarities in the material

Questions to consider:

What effect do they have on the work? How are they used? Why are these uses important?

DESCRIBE



explain, illustrate, express

- Write about the most important aspects of the topic you are discussing

Questions to consider:

What background info is necessary? What terms and concepts are central? How can you explain the content?

REFLECT



relate and understand

- Connect the material to your personal experience or observations

Questions to consider:

What do you think the meaning is? Why do you think this? How does your experience impact your interpretation?



Example Prompt

Develop an argument related to a comparison of some aspect(s) of two of the works we have read thus far.

Example Prompt

indicates depth over breadth

thesis not about the texts per se, but what they collectively say about the world

Develop an **argument** related to a **comparison** of some aspect(s) of **two** of the texts we have read thus far.

Limit references to class material

Summary vs. Analysis

When getting started, it's important to make sure we are familiar with the difference between summary, or descriptive writing, and analysis, which is typically synthesis-oriented.

SUMMARY means...



identify,
explain,
express,
tell

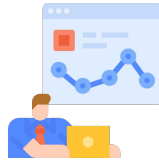
Its purpose is to...

Demonstrate your understanding

To do this...

Accurately describe ideas from a source using your own words

ANALYSIS means...



examine,
think
critically,
reconcile

Its purpose is to...

Elucidate an idea not immediately evident

To do this...

Present your own conclusions about elements of a source(s)



What Do I Write About?

A. REVISIT SOURCE MATERIAL

If you already have **the text(s) and/or media** you're supposed to be writing on, revisit it. (Reading any notes you took can help too!)

- ✨ What themes and arguments occur frequently?
- ✨ If you have multiple sources, how can you connect them?
- ✨ Do you need to do further research to get more information?

B. START RESEARCHING

Look at **what has been published about your topic** (the Oxy Library website and databases like *JSTOR* are great places to start)!

- ✨ What arguments do you find interesting?
- ✨ Does there seem to be a general consensus?
- ✨ Should you narrow your topic considering the amount of existing published research?



THE THESIS

03

What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis is a **one-sentence statement** at the end of your introductory paragraph.

It addresses your **research question** and presents your **main argument**.

The thesis **responds directly** to the prompt...

...and establishes **your topic's significance**.





How Do I Write a Thesis?

★ Remember that it's a process! ★

Before you develop your thesis...

- Collect and organize evidence
- Look for relationships between ideas
- Think about the significance of these relationships.

Return to the brainstorming you did while unpacking the prompt.

Ask yourself:

1. *What will I be writing about?*
2. *How will I support my ideas?*
3. *Why is my argument significant?*

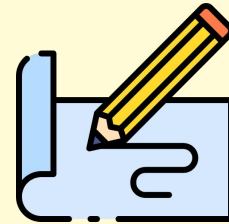
The Working Thesis

Begin with a draft of your thesis:

Remember that this draft doesn't need to be perfect; just aim to **capture your main idea**.

Be sure to include an **argument** that you can support with **evidence**.

Remember, it's a process! You may need to adjust your thesis as you write.



A Strong Thesis "PASS"es

P

Precise

A

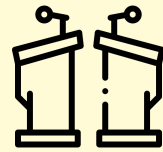
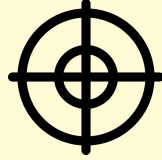
Arguable

S

Substantial

S

Specific

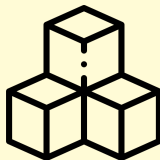
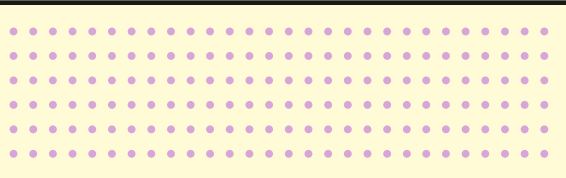


Precise

- Be as **specific** as possible
- **Avoid a broad** thesis; aim for complexity and clarity
- Limit the thesis to **one sentence** at the **end** of the **intro** paragraph

Arguable

- Make a claim that has **possible counter-arguments** to address
- Take a **position** on the issue
- A simple **statement of fact** is **not** a thesis



Substantial

- Tell the reader **what your argument is** and **why it matters**
- Connect your argument to a **larger conversation**
- Answer the question: **"So what?"**

Supportable


- Make an argument that you can support with **evidence**
- The claim should **not** be **outlandish** or **baseless**
- **Don't** just base it on **personal opinion**



Example Prompt

Develop an **argument** related to a **comparison** of some aspect(s) of two of the texts we have read thus far.

EXAMPLE: Revising Your Thesis [1]

 **Think:** *What makes this a weak thesis?*

Like Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a feminist text.


What makes this a weak thesis?

Lacks
specificity

Lacks an
argument

Doesn't have
an idea or
supporting
evidence

EXAMPLE: Revising Your Thesis [2]

 **Think:** *What makes this a stronger thesis? What is it still missing?*

Through an analysis of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, this paper will describe Gilman's arguments against women's subjugation, confinement, and infantilization by the Victorian-era patriarchy.



What makes this a bit better?

Though more specific (i.e., lists topics to be examined), it is still not *substantial*

Only descriptive; doesn't answer the "*So what?*"

EXAMPLE: Revising Your Thesis [3]



Think:

Does this thesis

P.A.S.S.?

Is it precise?

Arguable?

Substantial?

Supportable?

Through a comparative analysis of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), this paper demonstrates how Gilman's critiques of the Victorian-era patriarchy foreshadow the second-wave feminist movement's resistance against women's infantilization while similarly neglecting the raced and classed aspects of gendered oppression.

EXAMPLE: Revising Your Thesis [4]



Think:

Does this thesis

P.A.S.S.?

Is it precise?

Arguable?

Substantial?

Supportable?


Charlotte Perkins Gilman's critiques of Victorian-era patriarchy in *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) anticipated second-wave feminists' resistance against women's infantilization, exemplified by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), while similarly neglecting raced and classed aspects of gendered oppression.



THE INTRO

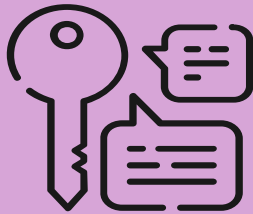
04

3 Goals of an Introduction

1. Introduce the **purpose** of the essay and any important ideas or concepts
 2. Capture the reader's **interest**
 3. Provide a **platform** for your thesis
- 

Introduce the Purpose of Your Essay

1



- Set up the **context** for your discussion (the **"they say"**)
 - What is the current discussion surrounding your topic?
- Establish **key terms**
 - These will unite your argument throughout the essay
- Introduce the **main "players"** in your essay
 - Central perspectives, the main theory/position, the text(s), and your research question

Capture the Reader's Interest

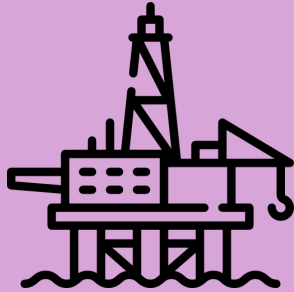
2



- **Convince** reader you have something interesting to say
- Introduce the **"I say"**
 - o Disagree—and explain
 - o Agree—but expand/extend
 - o Disagree & Agree—qualify argument
- Make the topic more **relevant** to reader = pique reader's **interest!**

Provide a Platform for Your Thesis

3



A **platform** includes...

- An overview of the **purpose** and **concepts** examined
- Important points that establish **context**
- Helps intro flow logically towards the **thesis** at the end



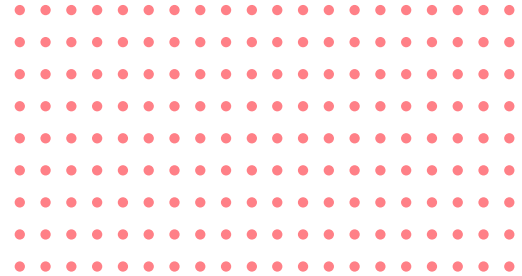
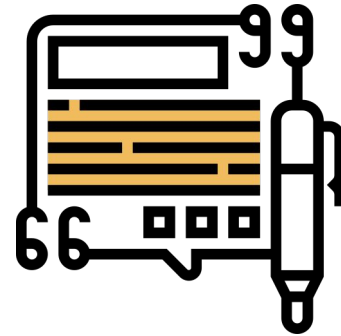
Think:

An essay with a strong intro makes *clear* and *sensible* **connections** between each aspect of the platform

WORKS CITED

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *"They Say / I Say": the Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. W.W. Norton and Company, 2018.

Turabian, Kate L. *Student's Guide for Writing College Papers* (Fifth Edition). University of Chicago Press, 2019.





Questions?

Thanks for coming!

Visit bit.ly/oxywc for more resources or to schedule an appointment with us



Follow @oxywritingcenter!

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by **Slidesgo**, including icons by **Flaticon**, infographics & images by **Freepik**

Please keep this slide for attribution

