

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Writing in Online and Distance Education

Prepared by the Office of Distance Education and eLearning Digital Scholarship department and The Writing Center's Writing Across the Curriculum program.

Learning by Writing Principles

WRITING CAN BE A POWERFUL TOOL FOR LEARNING ONLINE AS WELL AS OFF. WRITING CAN BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE IMMEDIACY OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTIONS AND THE DISTANCE OF ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE CONTEXTS.

- **Critical Thinking:** Informal writing can help students practice crucial habits of thinking or scaffold processes of inquiry. Grading can be informal; most important are connections to other activities. See <https://go.osu.edu/writingtolearn>.
- **Discussion:** Students learn more deeply by putting their understanding into the language of the discourse for each other. Frame expectations and model what you'd like students to demonstrate. Show your engagement by joining the forum occasionally and calling attention to posted insights elsewhere in the class.
- **Peer-review:** Students learn to examine their own writing by closely examining the writing of peers. Train students to evaluate writing by giving them a rubric and prompts and guide them in evaluating samples or models of writing. Require them to reflect on the peer feedback they receive.
- **Grading:** Use explicit rubrics crafted for each assignment to articulate your expectations. Limit your feedback to your central criteria, and give students a manageable set of goals for revision or future work. Avoid copy-editing, and focus on a few patterns of error students can correct.

For example...

READ	RESEARCH	COMMUNICATE
<p>Reading is more than absorbing information. Writing can help students practice critical reading strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annotations of assigned readings; ▪ Imagined dialogue between writers; ▪ Experimental control analysis 	<p>Research involves contextualizing and interpreting information. Writing can help students share and develop their inquiry with a wider group, either in the class itself or beyond:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Narrative literature reviews; Mapping a scholarly conversation 	<p>Communication requires a careful understanding of audiences and contexts. Writing can engage students with authentic readers and problems that matter to them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposals to key decision makers; ▪ Press releases on research
COLLABORATE	DISCUSS	PEER REVIEW
<p>Collaboration requires students to effectively coordinate work, to establish clear roles for group members to fulfill. Writing facilitates collaboration by allowing students to reflect on group dynamics as well as mediate their collective work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress reports; Contract negotiation 	<p>Discussion involves careful listening and considered responding. Writing can help students learn to engage their peers more thoughtfully.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instructor response to five posts; ▪ Group report on shared resources; ▪ Sample data analysis debate 	<p>Peer review involves students in assessing writing not just on surface issues like grammar or mechanics, but in fundamentally evaluating the intellectual work students are trying to emulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Imagined journal submission process; Role playing professional evaluation contexts (e.g. a grant review committee)

Writing Face-to-Face versus Writing Online

WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE	WHAT DOES (OR CAN) CHANGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Writing is writing. Online communication centers around the use of the same words as print. ▪ Learning is learning. The kinds of activities students learn best from do not substantially change. ▪ Audience is audience. Writing anywhere requires careful rhetorical attention to readers and situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multimedia: it is easier to include images, video, etc. ▪ Asynchronous: clarification is more difficult, so explicit instructions up front are crucial ▪ Collaboration requires more coordination ▪ Instructors cannot presume students' access to or comfort with technology

Copyright and eLearning: It's Complex

WHAT YOUR STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW	YOUR STUDENTS' RIGHTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borrowing online is both easier and more complex, so your students will need more precise guidance. The same rules apply: All material is copyrighted, unless that copyright has expired or been removed. See Copyright in Online Contexts flyer for details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your students retain all copyright to their own work, unless they explicitly remove that copyright. FERPA requires privacy for all graded student work. Students with disabilities are entitled to equal access to materials in the same timeframe as other students. Not all online services respect these rights.

ODEE-provided Online Learning Tools

CARMEN DISCUSSIONS	CARMEN DROPBOX, RUBRICS, AND TURNITIN	CARMEN QUIZZES
<p>carmen.osu.edu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forums contain multiple topics which class members can reply to in a hierarchical thread. Optional features such as ratings and upvoting enable reflection. Media embedding is available. Forums can be limited to sub-groups of students. Good for asynchronous student interaction and informal reflection 	<p>carmen.osu.edu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dropboxes can be created to allow individual students or groups of students to share files (papers) with instructors. Comments available. Turnitin provides similarity analysis to a corpus of academic papers. Rubrics can be composed and attached to facilitate grading and clarify expectations for students. 	<p>carmen.osu.edu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quizzes include short- and long-answer question types. Quizzes can be linked to release conditions so that other course material only becomes available on completion. Good for deeper assessments of student understanding Good for requesting student feedback
U.OSU.EDU	BUCKEYEBOX + NOTES	CARMEN WIKI
<p>u.osu.edu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free blog service; every person at OSU has unlimited blogs Good for informal and collaborative writing projects, especially including multiple pieces. Robust comment threads enable reflection and conversation Excellent for scaffolding assignments 	<p>box.osu.edu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> File and folder sharing tool; every person at OSU has 50Gb to use Facilitates collaboration and groups BuckeyeBox Notes allow students to create documents multiple individuals can edit at the same time from any location. 	<p>carmenwiki.osu.edu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides unlimited hierarchical wiki pages and user management Good for collaborative work and accumulating work over time into a larger structure

GET HELP	
ODEE Resource Center > resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu	Center for the Study & Teaching of Writing > cstw.osu.edu
Online learning spaces > carmen@osu.edu	Writing Across the Curriculum > cstw.osu.edu/wac
ODEE Course Design > odeeinstructionaldesign@osu.edu	Copyright Resources Center > go.osu.edu/copyright
iTunesU, publishing > digitalfirst@osu.edu	Teaching and Learning > go.osu.edu/libteaching