

Improving Your Writing

Introduction

You should consider each essay you write not as a final product in itself, but as a step towards developing the writing skills you will need before and after university.

Use the following checklist for each assignment as a guide to improving your own writing ability.

1. Clarify the details of your assignment with the professor if there's anything you're not sure about.
2. Think of writing as a process, and get started on an assignment early in the semester. Make a realistic time schedule for accomplishing the three steps of planning, writing, and revising.
3. Do some brainstorming about your topic as part of the planning process - remember that spending time planning your paper will save you time and agony in writing it.
4. Get feedback from the professor early in the semester about your choice of topic and proposed method of dealing with that topic.
5. Try to write that first draft in one sitting, without agonizing over and editing every sentence. The first draft is your opportunity to get your ideas on paper so that you can see how they are shaping up. Do not worry about grammar and punctuation while you create - leave that for the revising stage.
6. Remember to put aside your first draft for at least a full day after writing it before you begin revising. The longer you can leave it before revising, the more objective you can be about it and the more effective you will be at detecting problems.
7. Put some time, effort and thought into the revising process. Remember that 'revising' does not just mean 'recopying.' It means 're-seeing,' or re-envisioning what you are saying. Even professional writers do several drafts of any piece of writing.
8. Proofread your final draft carefully before submitting, even if it was typed by a professional. Most

professors would prefer to see you correct a typo with a pen than to assume you were careless enough not to catch it.

9. When your paper is evaluated and returned, read the comments thoroughly. Ask the marker to explain what he or she meant by a particular note if you don't understand.

10. Try to pick out one or two consistent errors on each paper and aim to improve or correct them on your next paper (see the Study Skills Tip Sheet series on writing skills.) If you can recognize and eliminate even one type of problem each time, you are on your way to becoming a more effective writer.

Need Advice or More Information?

The Counselling Department is the best source for advice and information on writing issues.

- The Academic Success Centre offers advice, information, resources, and tutoring on writing issues. Appointments can be made for face-to-face or online sessions with trained tutors. Book your appointment at www.ufv.ca/asc/book-an-appointment/, drop in to G126 in Abbotsford or A1212 at CEP, or phone 604-854-4573.
- Study Skills Tip Sheet handouts (like this one) provide information on a range of learning, writing, and academic computing issues and are free to students. The complete list of Study Skills Tip Sheets is available on the Counselling Department web-site at www.ufv.ca/counselling
- Workshops, seminars, and short courses on learning, studying and writing topics are offered regularly each semester by the Counselling Department. Please contact Student Services at 604-854-4528 (Abbotsford) or 604-795-2808 (Chilliwack) to set up an appointment.

With thanks to the University of Guelph
Learning Services
The Learning Commons

The Counsellors at UFV can help you with...

Career Planning

Help! I'm undecided about my career.

Most students come to university as a step towards a satisfying career, yet many are not sure what that career might be. Counsellors offer career counselling to help you explore your skills and interests, help you research educational programs and occupational areas that suit you, and help you decide how to choose a career goal.

Success Skills

*I want to study more effectively,
not just harder!*

If you are having trouble with your courses, or if you are "doing OK" but want to do better, then effective motivation skills, personal management strategies and study skills can help. Do you want to improve your memory, your note taking, your reading or other skills? Counsellors can work with you individually and in workshops to improve your effectiveness in studying and achieving success.

Personal Counselling

*Ugh...! I do NOT need these
problems right now!*

Coming to university is sometimes a big change, and when you have changes in your life, personal problems may appear, too. If you are having difficulties, Counsellors are here to help at no charge. The UFV Counsellors are trained professionals who can help you explore your options without telling you what to do. All our counselling is confidential within the limits of law. Just contact Student Services - you don't need to tell the folks at the front desk any details when you book a personal counselling appointment.

Emergencies happen. If you have an emergency, the Counsellors at UFV will see you as quickly as possible.

**The UFV Counsellors are in Student Services:
On the Abbotsford Campus: Room B-214, phone 604 854 4528
On the Chilliwack Campus: Room A-1318, phone 604 795 2808**