

Helping Students Make Effective Use of the Writing Centre **Find us in 3G11/Appointments at 204.786.9129**

We hope this information will help students better understand our writing tutoring services as they prepare for an appointment.

What do we do? We make better writers by giving students a vocabulary and the tools to talk about their writing. Student writers meet with peer tutors who have been trained in tutoring writing, and peer tutors sit down to discuss any concerns a writer has with his/her paper. Tutors focus on “higher-order” concerns first—organization, coherence, argument, evidence—and can also help you with any element of style, grammar, or mechanics.

What don’t we do? Because we make better writers by enabling students to view their own writing with a critical eye (ideally, we want to teach you to be your own editor), we are not a “fix it” shop where students can drop their papers off for proofreading or editing. However, our tutors are prepared to have explicit conversations about errors and grammar at a writer’s request.

Visit early. Many students think they must bring a written draft of a paper to the Writing Centre, but this is not true. On the contrary, we encourage you to visit during the pre-writing stage to discuss the assignment requirements, brainstorm topic ideas, and develop a plan or outline.

Preparation counts. Students should bring their written assignment sheets and notes about any additional instructions given during class. You should bring in relevant course materials, including textbooks and writing handbooks required in the course. Peer tutors often help students with documentation and other mechanics issues by demonstrating how to look up appropriate examples in their course textbooks.

Visit often. Writing assistance is especially helpful for students who visit the Writing Centre multiple times at various stages during the creative process. A single visit is often not sufficient time to address everything. The more you visit, the better the writing gets.

It’s your writing. Students need to take ownership of their Writing Centre appointments and subsequent revisions. You are not obligated to use every suggestion made by a peer tutor. The Writing Centre relinquishes control over what you do with your writing after you have visited us. Our goal is to help you make good decisions about your own work.

“I think my teacher said . . .” When students visit the Writing Centre for assistance in revising an essay, we encourage you to bring any written feedback you have received from your instructors. It is very helpful for the peer tutor to see exactly what the instructor has commented on so they can assist you with interpretation and application of the feedback.

“What was that?” Feedback from both instructors and the Writing Centre is open to interpretation. What the peer tutor suggests and what you hear and internalize might not always

be congruent. We encourage students to take notes during their appointment to minimize confusion and produce a tangible point of reference.

Back to the instructor. Our peer tutors are familiar with the general requirements for some courses but not with instructor-specific requirements. They rely on students' understanding of these requirements and might, therefore, need to send you back to your instructor with specific questions. Instructors are aware of this and are usually able and willing to help you.

Misguided expectations. If students visit the Writing Centre and do not find their session helpful, it might be useful to think about the initial expectations. Sometimes, well-intentioned students ask peer tutors to edit a paper or predict a grade, which our staff members are not permitted to do. If you don't fully understand why these requests cannot be fulfilled, a follow-up conversation with your instructor can provide further clarification.