

Developing Writing: How TRiO programs at all levels can adapt academic skills for writing improvement.

RESOURCE PACKET

Kara Baldwin
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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Contact Information:

Kara Baldwin kmbaldwi@uncg.edu
336-334-9763

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- I. How to implement a writing component into a TRiO program
- Creating a writing diagnostic and rubric
 - In high-schools
 - In community colleges and 4-year colleges
- II. Preparation and Planning: how to apply study strategies essay writing
- **CRITICAL THINKING:** How to pick a topic that fits the assignment and provides a working thesis
Essay component - Thesis/topic sentence. [Handout - 4 Levels of Questioning]
 - **ORGANIZATION:** How to decide on main points, going from general to specific.
Essay component – main points. [Handout - The Paragraph Burger/MEAL plan]
 - Research: consider sources (reading, concentration, note-taking) [Handout – SQ3R]
 - **DEVELOPMENT:** How to make paper flow and be coherent.
Essay component – writing style and flow. [Handout – Outline]
 - **TIME MANAGEMENT & MOTIVATION:** How to work backwards to create mini-deadlines to stay on task and self-motivated.
Essay component – time management and motivation. [Handout - Paper-planner]
 - Revision

WRITING DIAGNOSTIC

The diagnostic essay should take you about 30 minutes.

Please hand-write an essay on one of the following topics. Read the topics carefully and choose the one that interests you the most. Your essay should have at least 3 paragraphs. Please provide specific details and/or examples.

Be sure to turn in any pre-writing or planning you do before writing. Proofread your essay carefully before handing it in. The purpose of this essay is to give us a good indication of your strengths and weaknesses in academic writing.

Please use black or blue ink only. If you are using notebook paper, please write on the front side only.

Topics

Discuss a local, national, or international issue and explain why it concerns you.

OR

In the 2002 “State of the Union” address, the President of the United States encouraged all of us to dedicate two years, or 4,000 hours, over the course of a lifetime to community service. How can college students answer the President’s call?

*see sample essays (given in session)

WRITING RUBRIC

Writer name:

Final grade:				
Below				Above
Average	Competent			Average
1	2	3	4	5

Below average: Errors detract significantly from essay.
Competent: Errors are noticeable but essay fulfills assignment.
Above Average: Errors are minimal; essay is clear and engaging.

Thesis and/or topic sentence:	1	2	3	4	5
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The argument and/or topic are clearly discernible from the introductory paragraph.	1	2	3	4	5
The thesis or topic sentence responds appropriately to the assignment or prompt.	1	2	3	4	5
The thesis or topic sentence states a clear course of direction for the essay.	1	2	3	4	5

Rationale:

Organization and development:	1	2	3	4	5
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Sentences, ideas, and paragraphs are arranged in a logical order.	1	2	3	4	5
Ideas and remarks progress in depth throughout the essay.	1	2	3	4	5
Writer uses examples, evidence, and/or relevant details.	1	2	3	4	5

Rationale:

Coherence and flow:	1	2	3	4	5
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Writer demonstrates awareness of task, assignment, or topic.	1	2	3	4	5
Writing style is appropriate for anticipated readership.	1	2	3	4	5
Transitions within and between sentences, ideas and paragraphs are effective.	1	2	3	4	5

Rationale:

Grammar and mechanics:	1	2	3	4	5
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The writer uses vocabulary that is vivid, precise/concise, and relevant.	1	2	3	4	5
Essay has been edited for spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
If essay is research-based, citations and sources are used effectively.	1	2	3	4	5

Rationale:

Adapted from wvde.state.wv.us/teach21/writingrubrics by Whitney Scott

FOUR LEVELS OF QUESTIONING

LEVEL 1: Summarizing / Definition / Fact Questions

- What is the definition of ... ?
- Who did ... ?
- When did ... occur?
- How much/many ... ?
- What is an example of ... ?

LEVEL 2: Analysis / Interpretation Questions

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- How did ... occur?- Why does ... occur?- What are the reasons for ... ?- What are types of ... ?- How does ... function?- How does the process occur?- What are my own examples of ... ?- What causes ... to occur?- What results when ... occurs?- What is the relationship between ... & ... ?- How is ... similar to/different from ... ?- How does ... effect or apply to ... ? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What does ... mean?- What conclusions can be drawn from ... info?- What is (are) the problem(s), conflict(s), or issue(s)?- What are possible solutions/resolutions to these problems, conflicts or issues?- What is the main argument or thesis?- How is this argument developed?- What evidence, proof, support is offered?- What are other theories, arguments from other authors? |
|--|--|

LEVEL 3: Hypothesis / Prediction Questions

- If ... occurs, then what would happen?
- If ... changed, then what would change?
- What does theory X predict will happen?
- What hypothesis or theory explains this data or given information?

LEVEL 4: Critical Analysis / Evaluation / Opinion Questions

- Is ... good/bad? ... correct/incorrect? ... effective/ineffective? ... relevant/irrelevant? ... logical/illogical? ... applicable/not applicable? ... proven/not proven? ... ethical/unethical? **WHY?**
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of ... ? **WHY?**
- What is the best solution to the problem, conflict or issue? **Why** is it the best?
- What should or should not happen? **WHY?**
- Do I agree or disagree? **WHY?**
- What is my opinion? What is my support for my opinion?

THE PARAGRAPH-BURGER MEAL PLAN

Imagine each body paragraph as a hamburger:

The top bun is your topic sentence. Think of an interesting but clear transitional sentence at the beginning of each paragraph that tells your reader what the paragraph will be about.



The bottom bun is the final sentence that helps to hold your burger/paragraph together. Here, you will need to tell the reader how this paragraph links back to the main idea/thesis of your essay.

The burger itself represents the “meat” of your argument. That is, the main idea. Each paragraph should only contain ONE main idea. Think of the condiments as your supporting examples and your analysis. These condiments help to enhance your main idea. In other words, the examples you provide and analysis that follows is what gives your burger-paragraph its own distinct “flavor.” Without these, your burger-paragraph will be bland, boring, and pointless!

Then, answer the following questions:

Does each paragraph have one clear main idea?

Do you provide evidence or examples that support the main idea of the paragraph?

Do you explicitly state why and how the evidence/examples support the main idea of the paragraph?

Can you write one simple summary sentence of your paragraph? And does this summary sentence clearly support the main thesis or argument of your paper?

You can also think of your paragraph as making up a MEAL. That is, it needs to have all of the following parts:



Main idea: Each paragraph should contain only one main idea. If you introduce more than one main idea, you will confuse your reader. Think: what is the purpose of this paragraph?

Example: Provide examples or evidence that help to support the main idea. Examples can be in the form of summaries or quotations from a text, data or statistics, or an analogy that helps you to illustrate your point.

Analysis: This is often the most difficult step. The point of the analysis is to bring together the main idea with your examples in order to prove how and why these examples support your main idea. Be as clear and direct as possible! Never assume that your reader will just “get it.”

Link: Towards the end of your paragraph, you will need to link up the main idea of the paragraph to the main idea of the paper. Think: does this paragraph support my thesis?

Strategies for Active Reading: **SQ3R**

In college, students are expected to read a lot of material in a short amount of time. Often times, this reading is found in dense and dry textbooks. The five steps of the SQ3R Method—Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review—will help you to read more efficiently, pick out the most important points, and improve your retention. Although the method may seem like a lot of work at first, with practice, the process will become much easier and you will experience the benefits in no time!

Survey



1) Glance over the headings in the chapter to see the main points that will be developed. Also, read the final summary paragraph or section, if the chapter has one. This survey should not take more than one minute and will show the core ideas around which the discussion will focus. This orientation will help you organize the ideas as you read them later.

Question



2) Turn the chapter headings and subheadings into questions. Create an outline with headings that stand out and put subheadings underneath or tabbed over. If a section has a vocabulary word in bold, then quickly jot down the word underneath your question. This will help you organize the structure of the chapter. Writing questions will function to arouse your curiosity and so increase comprehension. Leave room underneath each question-heading so that you can go back and fill in the answers as you read.

Read



3) Once you've finished outlining the chapter (or just a section of the chapter) with your question-headings, you want to read in order to answer that questions you've outlined. This is not a passive plodding along each line, but an active search for answers. Reading to answer a question will make the important points stand out while allowing explanatory details to be much less cumbersome.

Recite



4) After you read the first section, look away from the book and try briefly to recite the answer to your question. Use your own words and include an example. If you can do this, you know what is in the book. If you can't, glance over the section again. An excellent way to recite from memory is to jot down cue phrases in outline form on a sheet of paper. Make these notes very brief and use them to prompt your verbal recitation.

Review



5) After you do steps 1 - 4 for the entire chapter, look over your notes to get a bird's eye view of all the points and their relationship to one another. Review by filling in the details from memory and explaining the content in your own words.

WRITING OUTLINE

THESIS: (What is your major argument?)

WORKING TITLE:

1. Introduction
 - a. Attention getter:
 - b. Credibility statement:
 - c. Preview of main points:
 - d. Thesis statement:

Transition (this will be the first sentence in the next paragraph):

2. Main point #1 (M.E.A.L. plan)
 - a. Example(s) that support the main idea
 - b. Analysis: how and why does the example(s) support the main idea?
 - c. Link: how and why does Main point #1 link up to the thesis (main argument of the essay)?

Transition/Signpost (this will be the first sentence in the next paragraph):

3. Main point #2 (M.E.A.L. plan)
 - a. Example(s) that support the main idea
 - b. Analysis: how and why does the example(s) support the main idea?
 - c. Link: how and why does Main point #1 link up to the thesis (main argument of the essay)?

Transition (this will be the first sentence in the next paragraph):

4. Main point #3 (M.E.A.L. plan)
 - a. Example(s) that support the main idea
 - b. Analysis: how and why does the example(s) support the main idea?
 - c. Link: how and why does Main point #1 link up to the thesis (main argument of the essay)?

Internal Summary/Transition (this will be the first sentence in the next paragraph):

5. Conclusion
 - a. Signal closing
 - b. Restate thesis
 - c. Review main points
 - i. Main point #1
 - ii. Main point #2
 - iii. Main point #2
 - d. Memorable statement or call to action (Ask: what do I want my reader to do now that s/he knows this information?)

Bibliography

Paper Planner



Step 1: Pre-writing

Deadline	Question to answer or task to accomplish	<u>When & how long</u> will I work on it?	Complete Y/N
	Pick a general topic.		
	What do I need to know in order to do a pre-write or narrow my topic?		
	What is my argument (thesis)?		
	What are the main points that make up my argument?		
	Which details and examples support main point 1?		
	Which details and examples support main point 2?		
	Which details and examples support main point 3?*		
	How might a reader disagree with me or add more to my points?		

Due date for pre-writing: _____

* add more main points as needed

Step 2: Drafting

Deadline	Question to answer or task to accomplish	When & how long will I work on it?	Complete Y/N
	Draft an introduction. (You may choose to do this at any point in the writing process).		
	Write about main point 1.		
	Write about main point 2.		
	Write about main point 3.		
	Draft a conclusion.		

Due date for first draft: _____

Step 3: Revising

Deadline	Question to answer or task to accomplish	When & how long will I work on it?	Complete Y/N
	How do my points fit together? Can my paper be organized more effectively?		
	How can I make my paper clearer and more specific?		
	Does my paper stick to my main point and answer it effectively?		
	Have I edited for mechanics and citations (e.g. spelling, grammar, punctuation)?		
	Is my paper formatted correctly? Does my paper follow citation guidelines?		

Due date for final draft: _____