

Title of Module: *Expectations for Academic Writing in the American Classroom*

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Module Overview

1. Introduction to Expectations for Academic Writing in the American Classroom

- *Writing is Cultural*
- *Culture, Reading and Writing Expectations*
- *Writing and Sources*

2. Academic English Writing

- *Academic English Purpose*
- *Academic English Audience*

3. The Process of Writing in the Academic Classroom

- *Writing Inside and Outside of the Classroom*
- *Peer Review*
- *Peer Edit Worksheet- Basic Summary*
- *Technology in the Classroom*
- *Writing Assistance Resources*

Video 1: Introduction to Expectations for Academic Writing in the American Classroom

Introduction and Outline

Today we will discuss the Expectations for academic writing in the American classroom. This will entail three specific topics. First, we will discuss writing as a cultural act; Next, the importance of purpose and audience in a cultural context of Academic English writing; and, then we will discuss writing classroom expectations.

Writing is Cultural

It is important to note that our particular system of Academic English writing is shaped by culture, political values, and educational practices, as well as a 2,000- year rhetorical tradition dating back to Plato and Aristotle. For students from other cultures and rhetorical traditions, these values and expectations are anything but natural. Culture dictates what is said, how it is said, who is allowed to say it, and why it is being said. These are fundamental differences between writing cultures, but they are not barriers. It is important to create an understanding of the cultural roles of both writers and readers in Academic English to achieve success for each student.

Culture, Reading and Writing Expectations

Writing is a cultural act, and in English the writer has many responsibilities to their reader. The writer must always think about the reader, providing a clear claim in the beginning, with organized, linear arguments throughout the text to support the ideas expressed. The writer does not depend upon the reader to decode these ideas, nor does the writer depend upon the reader to try to find them

hidden in text, or buried in confusing language. It is the writer's responsibility to be clear and direct, to make it easy for the reader to follow the text.

Writing and Sources

Writers are trying to convince readers what they are saying is true. In order to do this, it is a cultural expectation to refer to sources. There is a strong history of intellectual property rights in America, stemming from our Constitution. Ideas can be owned and writers are required to give proper credit to the author of the original texts consulted. Copying text and not providing credit to the proper source is an act of plagiarism and is viewed as stealing. Your instructor will assist you in learning the tools of research so you can be a credible and honest writer.

The tools of research are used to build on other texts and present ideas in an acceptable form. There are three tools you will employ: paraphrase, summary, and quotation. You will also provide a proper in-text citation using one of the official documentation styles, for example, APA or MLA.

Video 2: *Academic English Writing*

Academic English Purpose

In Academic English writing, students are expected to write in order to demonstrate their knowledge of a particular topic. However, there are several things to consider before one starts to write.

When considering your purpose of writing it is helpful to think about your motivation. Is this for a course assignment? Is this to express your ideas? It is also helpful to identify your attitude about your topic. Will you be objective, or are you skeptical about the topic you will write about? Of course, students are taught that writing for different purposes requires variations in overall and inner paragraph organization, word choice, use of evidence and types of evidence.

Academic English Audience

Academic writing also requires you to consider your audience, and that is something you must first think about when you are assigned a paper. Are they an instructor; your classmates? How are the members of your audience like you, or unlike you? Take into consideration demographics such as gender, age, religion, occupation, education, and political attitudes. The relationship you have with your readers may affect the tone you use when crafting your paper.

The audience will think about your writing, but what do you ultimately want them to do with your ideas? Stating your ideas directly will allow your audience to think a certain way about your writing. You will want your audience to think seriously about your topic, or you may want them to reflect on their own beliefs. Sometimes you may want your audience to take action, and this will require you to think about how to signal that to them what you want. It is also your responsibility to provide background with just the right amount of information for your audience.

Video 3: *The Process of Writing in the Academic Classroom*

Writing Inside and Outside of the Classroom

In the American classroom, the writing process is done in stages. Some of it is in class, perhaps in groups or pairs. However, some of it is done outside of the classroom and requires planning and preparation. But first, let us review the writing process and what is necessary to get it started. Each part of the process, from brainstorming, to outline, drafting, to revising and editing, are conducted in a way that allows the students hands on practice in order to build the necessary skills. The teacher may give an assignment and the student will be responsible for the many steps that must be taken. First, the student will brainstorm and outline the paper. The student will then be asked to draft the paper. This draft will be used both in the classroom during peer review workshops and in conferences outside the classroom.

Peer Review

Another tool that helps to improve the writing process is peer review. Each student will be involved in reviewing a piece of writing that is done by another student in the class. This is part of the process of writing in the American classroom and is taken quite seriously. You should bring a draft and be ready to participate. It is expected that each student be honest, considerate with constructive feedback, all the while openly communicating in a way that is going to assist classmates.

Peer Edit Worksheet- Basic Summary

Here is a sample peer-edit worksheet. Notice the language the instructor asks you to respond to. All of the questions are there to help provide a focused, strong, and positive set of suggestions. Students who have never been involved in this process may feel that they are not qualified to do this; they may feel that this is the job of the instructor. However, in the American classroom the goal of the instructor is to assist the students to become the best writer they can be. Viewing the writing of other students and deconstructing how the writing is pieced together is a valuable tool of learning, which will also help you become a self-sufficient writer. Once the students practice peer review in the classroom, it becomes an essential and expected, as well as welcomed part of the writing process.

Technology in the Classroom

During class time, instructors may ask you to work on your laptops or other devices for in-class workshops, collaborative activities, etc. The instructor will expect you to eliminate electronic distractions during workshops. Many times, the only way you may be receiving feedback on a particular assignment is during in-class workshops, so it is important to consider it as a highly productive time, which should be used fully, for your benefit.

Writing Assistance Resources

The instructor will then require the students to continue working on their drafts, and to attend conferences. Writing conferences are tremendously helpful and are set up with the intent of giving one-on-one guidance for the improvement of the paper. The instructor does not act as editor, but instead discusses the paper with the student. How could the various sections be improved? Is the thesis clear? Is the body organized and effectively supporting the thesis? Another resource for improving the paper outside the classroom is the writing center, staffed with knowledgeable writing consultants. Many students are required to see a writing tutor at least once during the semester, in order to get more perspectives on their writing.

The Checklist

Finally, after all the revisions and the peer reviewing is done, it is time to visit the final checklist that the instructor has provided for you. On this list are important steps of the writing process that you should have followed. Keeping these steps in mind will make you an independent, self-monitoring writer during your college life.

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