

To: Tutorial Instructors

From: Judy Hunter, Director of the Writing lab

Re: Teaching Writing in the Tutorial: Ten Tips for Success!

1. Have students write a short paper (maybe discussing their writing history, writing problems, writing goals) during the first week, to give you an idea about their writing style (this would be a good time to quickly fill out the quantitative writing assessment, which asks you to give a quick assessment of where they stand when they enter the college.)
2. Perhaps keep the first several papers very short, so that you can allow/expect total revision. Many have found happiness with one-page papers.
3. The students should be expected to write (and to get feedback on their writing) throughout the course. Having many assignments allows students to put to use what they have learned.
4. Have major responsibility for writing/editing/studying end by or just after Thanksgiving. Tutorials typically do not have a final exam in order to allow students to focus on their other courses. The same logic would suggest that there ought not to be papers or revisions due during exam week.
5. While revision is a necessary and good thing to teach, remember that revising after a long absence from a paper is difficult. It is usually better to have them revise immediately after they receive the paper back from you, and to give them a firm deadline after which you will not accept the revision.
6. Remember that feedback does not necessarily have to come from you. Carefully setting up peer feedback can give students the benefit of having more than one reader while easing the amount of time you put in reading and responding, or at least improving the quality of what you respond to.
7. Research shows that, in giving feedback on written work, earlier is better than later. That is, give students feedback early in their process—ask to see a thesis, a topic sentence outline, a plan of some kind and offer them comments on that.
8. The previous hint implies that the student is engaging in a process. To encourage this goal, scaffold the writing so as to make sure that students are working on their papers over time, not just the night before they are due.
9. Also in regard to feedback, more is not necessarily better. Giving the student three important areas to work on is probably more effective than correcting every error.
10. Readerly response—talking to the writer as a reader rather than as a judge—may be a more useful way of helping the student become a writer than labeling all the errors.