

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY®

**Academic Success Center**

**Writing Strategies & Peer Review**

# Writing & Communication Consultations



- Writing & Communication consultations are **free** and includes both virtual and in-person appointment options.
- Consultations use a peer mentoring model and can cover all stages of the composition process and assist with course assignments as well as professional documents.
- For the most up-to-date information, please visit our website:  
<https://www.asc.dso.iastate.edu/writingsuccess>

# Agenda

- I. Revision
  - I. Rhetorical situation
  - II. Introduction & Conclusion (including thesis)
  - III. Using sources
  - IV. Paragraph development & Transitions
- II. Editing Tips & Strategies
- III. Processing Feedback & Peer Review Strategies

# Tips for Effective Communication



- To create effective communication, **pay attention to the rhetorical situation**, or all of the elements surrounding your communication.
  - Know your **audience**
  - Keep your **purpose** in mind
  - Know the **context** or background information you need to provide your audience
  - Understand **expectations of the genre**

# Intro & Conclusion Goals

- Typical Intro Elements:
  - What does the reader need to know about the context?
  - How can you engage them in the topic?
  - Thesis/Preview “roadmap”
- Typical Conclusion Elements:
  - Quick Review!
  - Why does this matter and what should they do about it?



# Thesis Development



- A thesis is a road map of your argument that each topic sentence/body paragraph should connect to.
- Typically, 1-2 sentences at the end of the intro.
- Sets up the argument based on . . .
  - the assignment question or prompt.
  - a claim that others might dispute.
  - an organizational pattern (such as problem, solution, feasibility).

# Intro Practice

Anonymous vandals scrawl hate-filled graffiti outside a Jewish student center. Black students at a law school find unsigned fliers stuffed inside their lockers screaming that they do not belong there. Hate speech is rarely an invitation to a conversation. More like a slap in the face, it reviles and silences. A few federal courts have declared overly broad hate-speech codes unconstitutional, as well they should. Nothing is gained by a rule so broad it could be construed as forbidding the discussion of controversial subjects such as evolution or affirmative action. But this is not what most people mean by hate speech, nor are colleges barred from drafting narrow rules that hone in on the conduct they wish to control. And when they do, courts are very likely to be in their favor. *Reasonable rules aimed at accommodating that diversity and regulating the conduct of bullies and bigots are to be applauded—not feared.*

\*\*example condensed from Delgado (2012)

**Practice: Strengths? How might you improve this thesis?**

# Using Sources



- Revision questions to consider:
  - How many sources are required? What citation style is required?
  - Did you make it clear whether you agreed or disagreed (or a combination) with the source?
  - Did you introduce and follow up on the source?
  - Did you respond to the “who cares?” as well as the “so what?” by the end of the paragraph?



# Paragraph Development



- Suggestions for “framing” source material:
  - Condense to 1-2 cited sentences (citing everything that needs to be cited).
  - Show how or why this example(s) supports this topic sentence/claim.
  - Finish the argument: How can you further explain why this evidence matters or how it supports your topic sentence/claim?
  - Most of the paragraph should be your own words and thoughts, especially the start and end of each paragraph.

# Transition Examples



Transitions vary based on content or organization and can be both internal and between primary sections.

- Sequence signposts: First, next, then, in conclusion
- Hook: Now that we've explored \_\_\_\_, let's look closer at\_\_\_\_\_.
- Signal relationship between ideas: similarly, in contrast to, generally, consequently
- Provide emphasis: in particular, for example

# Editing for Conciseness

- The following tips can help you achieve concise communication:
  - Edit out **meaningless modifiers** (Ex: really, very, great)
  - Use **strong** verbs (limit “to be” verbs)
  - **Split up** longer sentences
  - Use **active** rather than passive voice
  - Create a reverse outline to determine what ideas you can delete or clarify.
- For additional suggestions: <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center/resources/student-resources/grammar-resources-writers/top-twenty-errors-undergraduate-writing>

# Editing Strategies



- To focus on sentence structure over content, start from the last sentence of your paper and work your way up.
- Read your piece out loud (or have computer read it to you).
- Ask a friend to read your piece out loud (or silently).
- ISU students can use Grammarly Premium for free:  
<https://grammarly.engl.iastate.edu>.

# Peer Review Strategies



- Reflect on your goals first: What do you want your partner to focus on when looking at your work?
- Recommendations for reviewing your peer's work:
  - Point out strengths but don't stop at praise.
  - Give constructive comments with specific ways they can improve.
    - Focus on how choices (like organization) are meeting audience & purpose expectations.
    - Consider ethical requirements like citations.

# Receiving or Processing Feedback

- How are you accessing and processing feedback?
- Recommendations:
  - What went well? What would you say to a friend if they received this feedback?
  - Focus constructive criticism on 1-2 areas.
  - What questions do you have?
  - Follow-up communication with the instructor! (review feedback, ask questions, identify revision opportunities)
  - How can campus resources help you with your next goals?

# References

- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Pearson.
- Delgado, R. (2012). Hate cannot be tolerated. In G. Goshgarian, (Ed.), *What matters in America: Reading and writing about contemporary culture* (pp. 198-199). Pearson.
- Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2018). *They say/I say: The moves that matter in academic writing* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). W. W. Norton & Company.
- Schick, K., & Miller, L. (2020). *So what?: The Writer's Argument* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Oxford University Press.