Dos and Don’ts of College Writing
Monday, February 22nd @ 7 PM ET
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Please click here to view this recorded workshop:
http://khe2.adobeconnect.com/p659kfaycmj/
Tonight we will be discussing the proverbial dos and don’ts of college writing. To kick the session off we will first discuss what constitutes college writing. What is it? When do we use it? Why is it different from other writing?

Next, we will discuss 5 of the most important “dos” of college writing, as well as 5 “don’ts” that I personally observe consistently in both tutoring and paper review. Many of these issues pair well with each other, and I think you’ll be able to recognize the patterns rather simply.

Lastly, we will discuss the variety of options readily available to students to further progress your writing. You will continually hear me mention Live Tutoring and Paper Review throughout the presentation, and links for these resources will be provided multiple times throughout the presentation.
To begin, what defines “college writing?” Most of the folks here tonight may have completed some form of collegiate writing in their academic career thus far, but, college writing includes any writing intended for an academic audience. Nearly each and every course here at the university requires some form of academic writing at some point or another, regardless of the course the student may be taking—and this even goes for the math and science courses, as well.

College writing differs, of course, from class to class, but, for the most part, academic writing will always include a centralized idea and/or a thesis statement. Essentially, this is a preview of what the paper will be about. Alongside a thesis or general idea, the paper will certainly include body paragraphs, support via citation if required, and a solidified conclusion to wrap up the author’s ideas. Each assignment is different, however, and we will begin to discuss the importance of this later in the presentation.
Let’s chat about what you can do to better your writing. It may seem a bit bold and straightforward, but the first step to bettering yourself, and I think we can discuss this in about 10 million different scenarios, involves cutting out the excuses. Think about it, folks: It’s just after New Year’s, everyone finds motivation in one day, most notably to work out or stop eating six burritos per day, and then two days later you’re in line at Chipotle justifying your excuse. It has to end, and most notably with your academic writing.

To begin, be sure that you understand what you need to accomplish with the assignment. We’ll cover this in much more detail in upcoming slides, but understanding the problem before identifying the solution is simple common sense. If you know what is being asked of you, you’re already three steps ahead of the person that barely read the instructions and only has two paragraphs completed ten minutes before the due date.

The best way to avoid this, as we’ll discuss further, includes planning ahead. Make a schedule; set cell phone notifications or updates; write instructions on your hands—I don’t care! The most important lesson here is to be sure you allow yourself enough time to accomplish the tasks asked of you. Starting on a paper a week or two in advance is not a silly waste of time; instead, this will help ensure that you have enough time for, yes, breaks, and plenty of time to ask questions and
shape your draft accordingly.
Now, before you begin you must understand how to begin by reading the instructions. Yes, I know that sounds silly, but how many of us here tonight can admit that we glaze over instructions before typing a draft at times? I’m guilty; I do it all the time. Think about it this way: I’m a male, right? Imagine when I get a new table from Ikea with those instructions that, well, who needs them, right? A attaches to B, so on and so forth. Now, let’s hop in our time machine and fast-forward three hours later—guess who is still wondering how to get the process started? It’s a silly metaphor, I know, but we all do this at some point, and the worst possible time to partake in this form of laziness is during academic writing.

I always tell students to read and then re-read assignment instructions before they even put one word on the page. Some folks enjoy annotating or highlighting specific portions of the instructions to better understand what’s being asked of them.

You can also feel free to always ask questions. Never be afraid to reach out to a professor, a tutor, or even a peer to discuss what’s being asked of you. Everyone needs help with instructions at some point in his or her academic career; it’s a very normal occurrence. Also, as you will see in the coming slides, you have a plethora of options available to you in the form of academic tutoring, as well. Come to us with questions, concerns, and even a chunk of your paper that you feel may need some assistance in relation to the assignment.
This tends to be the least favorable bit of advice I offer to students, but one of the biggest “dos” of college writing includes drafting. Not once, not twice, but at a bare minimum of three times—and three is being modest.

When you draft your work, this allows for multiple sets of eyes to observe the work, offer feedback, and help shape the assignment accordingly. One fault of writers includes only producing two-to-three drafts as they are learning and then, they convince themselves that this is not necessary as they progress in their writing. Wrong. Very wrong, indeed. Every student should view a writing assignment as, essentially, three papers: your rough draft, your revision, and your final draft. If the student utilizes Paper Review, Live Tutoring, and poses questions to the appropriate resource, three drafts should result in a significantly better grade than simply sitting down and pumping out a paper. Even for folks who claim they write their best drafts on the first go, I promise that something can be improved, even after three to four revisions, so please take advantage of planning, drafting, and seeking assistance as needed.
The first “don’t” on the list includes one of the simplest yet most complex bits of advice an educator can pass on to a student: do not give up. Far too often do I see students that simply give up on an assignment for a variety of reasons: I don’t understand the assignment; I have too much to do in my other classes; The professor never did A, B, or C; and my favorite “I’m just not good at writing.” If that’s the excuse, you’re not good at making up excuses either.

Call it tough love, call it what you will, but students must stay positive if they are to achieve their goals in higher education. If you have trouble with the instructions, if you aren’t getting through to your professor, or if you just simply feel overwhelmed for whatever reason, why not seek tutoring options? I clear up student confusion via instructions at least 5-6 times per week; it’s very common, and you’re not alone. The most important aspect of progressing in your academic career revolves around understanding. If you’re in the dark, your work is in the dark.

That said, to brighten up the prospect of college writing, have a bit of fun! This is YOUR work! Do what you want with it while making sure you accomplish your goals. Most people don’t assimilate “fun” and “writing” in the same breath, but the more you understand and enjoy the assignment, the better your grade will be—and that goes without question. Think about a boring conversation at a dinner party: Are you going to respond or just nod and smile a bit until you can leave and continue
living your life? Don’t make academic writing like a boring dinner party—state what you want to say, be enthusiastic, and choose a direction that works best for you. This will also help you maintain a level of motivation for the entirety of the assignment.

Lastly, and this may seem a bit odd, but always take breaks. Remember that planning I was harping on about earlier? If you allow yourself enough time throughout the week or two, you can take a day or two break to refresh your thoughts and then approach the assignment refreshed and ready to go. I know that this takes a bit of sacrifice throughout the week, but education requires just that. Plan accordingly so you can enjoy your free time as you see fit.
Students seem to avoid this next piece of advice far more than I would like to see. If you don’t feel confident with your assignment, why not ask for help?

First and foremost, folks, professors do not bite—at least to the best of my knowledge! Nor do professors seemingly never respond to e-mails. Professors are educators, right? They are here to help and advise you accordingly, right? So why are so many students terrified to e-mail their professor? One of the main reasons, at least from my experience, revolves around the formality of the e-mail/question being sent. When you communicate with a professor, do not treat him or her like a peer. In fact, do not even treat peers like they are peers. In an academic setting, always assume that professionalism reigns supreme. A proper greeting, formalized and specific question, followed by a sound salutation speaks volumes to professors and shows your intent to succeed. If for whatever reason this option fails to yield results, as mentioned before, contact the Writing Center.

Via the Paper Review service and Live Tutoring service, students have the ability to receive quality feedback regarding their writing. In tutoring, students can meet one on one with a tutor for 20 minutes to discuss issues. In Paper Review, students receive a detailed review of their paper alongside a video review covering the areas in need of improvement.
That said, you can also contact your peers as they are a fantastic resource. Sure, you may be confused, but a fellow student may well be able to offer sound suggestions toward your given assignment. You can also consult your advisor, as well, as he or she will be able to guide you toward resources you may be in the dark about.
So let’s do a quick survey here in the chat: How many folks, honestly, procrastinate as much as I did during my first year in college? Come on, now; be honest! I’m at fault—we all are. Let me set up a scenario for you:

It’s Sunday night, your paper is due on Tuesday, 11:59 PM EST, and you’ve just discovered the greatest new series on Hulu or Netflix—South Park is a great choice and one I always fall victim to. You now face a two-way street, right? Do I watch an episode or two to relax before typing or should I, you know, actually do my work and then enjoy my free time? The picture alone speaks volumes to how we all think, and that’s okay—to an extent. The best advice that I can give to students involves A.) Planning and B.) Avoiding the temptations outside of your schoolwork. First and foremost, always presuppose that your paper is more important than the next episode of the Walking Dead; let’s face it, there is no way around it. The more you push aside an assignment the more you are distancing yourself from the consistency of thought required to accomplish the assignment effectively. Just because we’ve coined the term “last minute” does not mean you need to follow suit. Be sure that you plan accordingly, stay motivated, and, with proper planning, you can actually watch your favorite shows or do your favorite activities via the break system we discussed earlier. In a simple formula: Planning well in advance + Scheduled breaks = A happy student.
Another common “don’t” in academic writing involves the assumption that all assignments are similar. That could not be further from the truth. Like we’ve been discussing throughout the duration of the presentation this evening, carefully examining the assignment instructions really will help avoid many of these issues covered today. Now, as I have personally experienced what seemed to be the exact same assignment 800 times in one year, there will, of course, be similarities present across assignments, but this is where that notion ends. Yes, APA format is typically required; yes, introductions and conclusions are required; for most assignments, citation is required at some point, but that really ends the similarities.

Each professor expects something additional that another professor may have tweaked a bit. For instance, one professor may require very specific introductions, stating A, B, and C will be accomplished, while another professor may be much more open to the student’s voice in the introductory paragraph. For this reason, as I’ve mentioned multiple times now, reading and understanding exactly what the instructor wants in the paper may well be the best starting point before typing 5-10 pages. I always tell students to follow instructions first and their instinct second. You may think that you understand how to create an introduction, and you may well be correct, but your professor grades your assignment, so be sure you adhere to instructions, differentiate assignments accordingly, and succeed in your endeavor.
Another major “don’t” when it comes to academic writing includes citing far too often which makes the work, essentially, not your own work. When you think of an academic paper, citations included, 80 percent of the work should be your own genuine thought, while 20% of the information comes from outside sources. Think of it this way: The paper should be your own genuine thought—how you want to respond to the assignment. The remainder of the draft, in theory, should be occupied by citation to back up your ideas with accredited work. Now, this may well be the norm but is not always feasible; some assignments require much more citation and research, so be sure that you adhere, again, to your assignment instructions.

The most important aspect of citation boils down to one simple principle: Let your writing guide the readers and let your citation supplement your ideas. Think of citation as the safety net in this regard; you provide the ideas, you’ve done the research, so allow you sources to complement your ideas and make them that much better. We have a plethora of citation-specific workshops that are available via our archived workshops which we’ll explore momentarily, but just know that we also offer APA workshops each and every month, so please take advantage as you see fit.
DO NOT PLAGIARIZE

Plagiarism: The theft and use of another’s words, ideas, results, or images without giving appropriate credit to that person, therefore giving the impression that it is your own work.

KU Academic Integrity Policy

We all knew this one was coming, didn’t we? Simply put, do not plagiarize. Ever. You will always be caught in some form or another. Via the KU Academic Integrity Policy, plagiarism is defined as the theft and use of another’s words, ideas, results, or images without giving appropriate credit to that person, therefore giving the impression that it is your own work. Simply put, you didn’t give credit where credit was due. Now, since this is not a citation workshop, please do take advantage of our workshop page in the coming slides to access this material. We cover literally everything there is to know about APA citation and formatting via multiple workshops that have been pre-recorded, so please take advantage of these tutorials or visit Live Tutoring for further assistance with citation.

The most important aspect, simply, revolves around honesty: Give credit where credit is due, and you will avoid all issues entirely. Just with all things in life, being honest produces the best results, even in collegiate writing.
As a checklist of sorts, here are five “simple tools” to avoid to ensure your academic success here at KU.

First, Grammarly is not the be-all, end-all. In fact, this program creates more issues, from my experience, than it solves. Avoid this at all costs. Why not stop by Live Tutoring? We have an incredible amount of tutors who can assist you with your sentence-level and/or grammatical issues. Live Tutoring and Paper Review work the best in this fashion as they provide the most comprehensive overview.

Next, and this applies to both papers and editing, never, ever purchase your work online. You’re wasting both money and time. Since KU courses utilize TurnItIn, these papers will be impossibly simple to identify. Do yourself a favor and just do the work—you’ll learn and not have to worry about accusations.

Citation generators—what can be said? Sure, they are simple and easy, but did that company create the APA rules? If not, they are not the source to utilize, as they are rarely, if ever, 100% accurate. Instead, use our Most Common Citations tutorial (link provided at the end of this presentation); this has everything you need for in-text and reference citations.
Lastly, simple isn’t always correct. If you finish a six-page paper in one hour, do you really think that’s going to suffice? Sure, these, as you can see by the picture, “sites” suggest you do so, they do so based on a mentality to crank students out without any substance. Utilize the services here at the university—plus, they’re free. We have tutors available in the writing center 5 days per week, so take advantage of what’s available. As our motto states, we’re here to help.
Lastly, and I know I have harped on this enough, please visit Live Tutoring. We help thousands, yes, thousands of students per year, so please take advantage of this service! All of our tutors are trained to assist you with your writing concern, so please do your best to make an attempt to attend a session for any writing assistance. More will be discussed in the coming slides regarding the process, so let’s not waste anymore time. Please do understand that ANY of your writing concerns can be addressed in Live Tutoring. This is your safe space for writing, so please do take full advantage of our fantastic staff 5 days per week. I’m more than confident that anyone from our crew can address your questions.
You are also more than welcome to connect with the KUWC’s public webpage. You can actually Google and find this page. This is also a great way for you to stay connected to the KUWC through Facebook and Twitter. Many of our resources are here as well.
Come visit us. We can be found under the My Studies tab, then under Academic Support Center. You’ve all been here before regarding the workshop sign in, so it’s the same process with a tiny tweak.
On the main Academic Support Center page, you will see the Writing Center links. These include Live Tutoring, Paper Review Service, the Writing Reference Library, Citation Guidelines, Workshops, English Language Learner, and Fundamental writing help. Notice, you can access the Kaplan Guide to Successful Writing on the right hand side in both print and audio form.
Click on any of the links on the slide to learn more.

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Writing Fundamentals Program
Effective Writing Podcasts Series
First-Term Student Resources

The best time to do a paper review in the Kaplan University Writing Center is after you have written your first draft. When you come to us early, we can help you the most by helping you with the structure of your paper. Many students send papers at the last minute because they want us to simply proofread their paper. However, KUWC writing tutors do not simply proofread the paper for you; we want to help you learn to write and proofread your own papers. You can submit a first draft, and then
submit a later draft if you need further help on an assignment.

If you need help before you write the first draft, you can use live tutoring. During live tutoring, you can ask questions and brainstorm with a tutor. Live tutors can help you with other stages in the paper writing process as well.
Contact Information

Amy Sexton, Tutor, Workshops
Kyle Harley, Tutor, Fundamentals + ELL
Write us at kuwc@kaplan.edu!

Workshops are recorded and recording links, with an accompanying PowerPoint, are posted on the Writing Center Workshops page after the workshop.

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