



Palomar College English Department Writing Center

Tutor Handbook

2018-2019 Academic Year

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Note: Much of the material that follows is taken from the books *What the Writing Tutor Needs to Know* and *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. These are both excellent guides to tutoring. If you'd like to read them, we have copies available in both the Escondido and San Marcos centers.

A. General Introduction

We're excited to have you as a tutor at the Palomar College Writing Center! This booklet contains an overview of some of our policies and procedures, information about the English composition classes offered at Palomar, and some strategies to make your tutoring sessions more effective.

Tutoring sessions are 25 minutes long, and students may sign up in advance for one session per day. After that first session additional time to meet with a tutor again is based on availability, with a limit of two sessions per day. Walk-in appointments are based on tutor availability. (More information about the scheduling process is available in Section C of this Tutor Handbook.)

B. Policies and Procedures

a. Reporting Absences

For those of you working on the main campus, when you must report an absence or if you are going to be late, please call the Writing Center at 760-744-1150, ext. 2778. For those working at the Escondido Center, the North Education Center in Fallbrook, and the South Center Education Center, please call the TLC Coordinator at your location.

In all cases – whether you're working on the main campus or at a TLC – please also send a follow-up email to Jeannette.

b. Break Schedule

The Writing Center follows the break policy of California's labor laws:

| <u>Hours worked:</u> | <u>Unpaid lunch breaks:</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 9 or more | 1 hour |
| 6.5-8.5 | 30 minutes |
| 6 | Optional 30 minutes |
| 5.5 or less | No lunch break |

* Tutors receive a 15-minute paid break for every four hours of work. One scheduled break per shift is indicated on each tutor's daily sign-in sheet.

c. 2018-2019 Academic Year Work and Holiday Schedule

Tutoring generally begins the second week of the semester and ends on the last Thursday of the semester.

During summer session, tutoring begins on the third day of summer school.

- **For Fall 2018:**
 - Start and end dates: Tutoring starts on Monday, August 27, and ends on Thursday, December 13
 - Holiday schedule: The Writing Center is closed on Monday, 9/3 (Labor Day); Monday, 11/2 (Veterans Day); and the week of November 19-23 (Thanksgiving break)
- **For Spring 2019:**
 - Start and end dates: Tutoring starts on Monday, February 4, and ends on Thursday, May 23
 - Holiday schedule: The Writing Center is closed on Friday, 2/15 (Lincoln's Day); Monday, 2/18 (Washington's Day); and March 25-29 (spring break)

C. Our Tutor Appointment Scheduling Process

So that you understand how our appointment scheduling process works, here is some information about how the front desk handles the sign-up process.

- **Advance appointment sign-ups**
 - Appointment scheduling sheets are in the purple binder on the counter.
 - Up to two weeks of appointment sheets are in the binder; there should always be a minimum of one full week.
 - Students can only sign up in advance for 1 session per day.
 - The scheduling sheet is transferred from the binder to the front desk and is used to manage appointments for the day.
- **Walk-in appointments**
 - Students who walk in and want to schedule a same-day appointment check with front desk person to find available time slot tutor.
 - If there is a spot available, the front desk person writes the student's name on the scheduling sheet; if there are no open appointment spots, the front desk person gives student the option of being added to the waitlist.

- **Waitlist/back-up appointment sheet**
 - This sheet is used for walk-in appointments when there are no open spots available on the scheduling sheet for that day.
 - This sheet is also used to assign additional time with a tutor.
 - The front desk person will add student's name to the waitlist and tell them they will be notified if time with tutor becomes available.
 - Tutor time is allotted on a first-come first-served basis; student needs to be in the room for time to be allotted.
 - The front desk person will check the appropriate column to indicate whether the student is a walk-in or seeking additional time with a tutor.
 - When a student from the waitlist is placed with a tutor, the front desk person will indicate the session start time and the tutor's name.
- **Pre-session form**
 - When students sign-in, the front desk person asks if they are here for a tutoring appointment.
 - If yes, once students sign in on the computer, the front desk person gives them a pre-session information form to fill out and return to the front desk.
 - When the student returns the filled-out form, the front desk person writes the student's location on the form and brings it to tutor.
- **Additional time with a tutor**
 - Students can sign up for one session in advance, and if there is time available may have one additional session with a tutor for a total of 2 sessions or maximum of one hour with a tutor in one day.
 - If a student wants additional time with a tutor that essentially extends their appointment time, tutors may continue working with student and indicate additional time on their tutor registration sheet. Tutors may also suggest signing up for a non-consecutive appointment so that student is encouraged to work independently to apply feedback from initial session before working with tutor for additional time.
- **Cancelling or changing pre-scheduled appointments**
 - If someone cancels an appointment, the front desk person erases the student's name from the schedule sheet so that spot is available for another student.
 - If someone already has an appointment scheduled but comes in earlier wanting to work with a tutor, they may CHANGE their appointment time if there is an earlier spot available. If there is no earlier spot, the student has the option of going on the waitlist to see if tutor time opens up. In this case, the student name remains in the originally scheduled space until they are placed with a tutor. At that point the name should be erased from the scheduling sheet to make that spot available for another student.

- If a student who has given up a pre-scheduled appointment for an earlier appointment wants additional time with a tutor they may request that AFTER they have met with the tutor. At that time, the student's name should be added to the waitlist by the front desk person and the column checked for "2nd" appointment.
- **No shows**
 - If someone does not show up for a scheduled appointment, the front desk person puts a circle next to their name on the sign-up sheet. That time then becomes available to assign to someone on the waitlist.

D. Daily Work Procedures for Tutors

- **Clip board with student sign-in sheet**
 - When you arrive at the Writing Center at the start of a shift, pick up the sign-in sheet at the front desk. Have students sign in on the sheet at the line for their appointment time.
- **Tutor appointment forms**
 - Students fill out forms that help them identify where they are in the writing process and what they want to focus on in their session with a tutor. The forms are also used to communicate to the tutor the who, when, and where of the next appointment.
- **Start times**
 - Appointments are scheduled to start at 5 and 35 after the hour. This is meant to give you a brief pause between sessions. If you are in a session, ideally you will be given the form for the next session on the hour/half-hour so you have a moment between sessions and are ready to begin at the scheduled time. But if you have not just ended a session and the next scheduled student is here and ready, please start sooner rather than waiting for the 5- or 35-minute mark. Also, the clock in the WC is slow. Do not wait for the clock to hit the 5- or 35-minute mark to head over to a student.
- **Check in before you leave the WC during a time that is not your scheduled break**
 - There are occasions when a walk-in gets scheduled with a tutor who has an open slot, but that tutor is not in the room.
- **Downtime between tutoring sessions**
 - Use this time to review articles and information on tutoring practice. There are books and articles here in the Writing Center, and materials

on-line as well. We also encourage you to circulate through the room at least once per block of downtime to see if any students working in the Writing Center need assistance.

- **Breaks**
 - As mentioned above, one scheduled break per shift is indicated on the sign-in sheet. Paid breaks are 15 minutes for a shift under 6 hours; unpaid breaks are 30 minutes for shifts of 6 hours or more.
- **Pay period**
 - The monthly pay period is for hours worked between the 25th of one month and the 24th of the next month. The one exception is June/July, which have separate time sheets since the new fiscal year at Palomar always begins on July 1. Time sheets are circulated in the week before the 24th of the month.

E. Script for Classroom Visits/Presentations

At the beginning of the semester, we'll ask that you visit classrooms to do short, five-minute presentations about the Writing Center and the services that we offer. Below is a script that you can use when you visit those classrooms.

General Information:

You may use the Writing Center to work on any writing assignment; it is not necessary to make an appointment with a tutor before using the center. When you first come in, please sign in at the front desk. Computers are available for research and writing, tables are equipped for laptops, and we also have a limited supply of reference books to use. Save your work often as we do occasionally have power outages, and always remember to sign out at the front desk before leaving. Food and drink is not allowed anywhere near the school's computers.

Tutors and Appointments:

Tutors at the Writing Center all have at least a Bachelor's degree, and are qualified to assist you with many types of writing projects, from research papers to scholarship essays and transfer letters. If a tutor's help is required, appointments are 25 minutes, so please be on time to avoid losing your appointment. After twenty minutes, the tutor has the option to begin wrapping up the session with instructions on your next step in the writing process. To make a tutoring appointment, call 760-744-1150 ext. 2778, or stop by H-102. Hours are the same as on our bookmarks, and we are open Monday-Thursday until 5:30 P.M., with the last tutoring appointment being 5:00 P.M. On Fridays, we close at 2:00 P.M.

Printing and what to bring to your appointment:

Assignments to be looked at by a tutor need to be printed because the Writing Center's computers aren't always available, and a printed document is easier to read than a document on a laptop. Phones cannot be used to show the tutor your paper.

Students who need the tutor to sign a paper attesting to the fact that the student met with them should do so at the time of the appointment. The slips cannot be signed after-the-fact unless researched first by a front desk person, which creates extra work for them, and interrupts the tutor.

We do have a printer to use; however, you will need to have money on your Palomar GoPrint account because we do not have a machine to load money on it. Limited free printing is available at the Student Union (in room SU-28) if you have an activity card.

For your appointment, you should bring a flash drive to save your work, all your materials relevant to the assignment, a printed copy of what you have so far, and most important of all, your prompt from the instructor.

F. Information about Palomar's English Department Composition and Literature Classes

Our English Department offers a variety of literature classes, as well as a full sequence of composition classes. Beginning in Fall of 2018, the English Department will no longer be offering English 10. The current sequence of English composition classes is:

- **English 50A/Prep for College Composition** – Fall 2018 is the first semester that this six-unit course will be offered; the class combines elements of the former English 10 class (elements of grammar and sentence-level work) with English 50 (paragraphs and short essays)
 - The English Department's Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) for English 50A are:
 1. Exhibit skills in paraphrasing, summarizing, and the incorporation of quotations in writing.
 2. Organize and develop five or more paragraphs into an essay that sufficiently supports a thesis.

- **English 50/Introductory Composition** – this four-unit class focuses on writing short essays
 - The English Department’s Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) for English 50 and 50A are the same:
 1. Exhibit skills in paraphrasing, summarizing, and the incorporation of quotations in writing.
 2. Organize and develop five or more paragraphs into an essay that sufficiently supports a thesis.
 - **the English 50/50A final exam:**
 - Students in both Eng 50A and Eng 50 finish the course by taking a final exam that is worth 30% of their grade in the class.
 - The final exam is given on the Wednesday and Thursday of Week 15 from 2:00-4:00 each day.
 - The students will be writing about an article that their instructors pass out to them one week before the final exam dates. Once the articles are passed out, no one (including the instructors and tutors) is allowed to discuss the articles with the students.
 - The final exam is not graded by students’ own instructors, but is rather graded by two English instructors at a group grading session that takes place the Friday of Week 15.
 - Please note that tutors are not allowed to help students with anything other than general preparation for the final exam; do not assist students with reading or responding to the article.
 - A copy of the rubric that the English instructors use to grade the final exam essays is included in Section S of this handbook.
- **English 100/English Composition** – this four-unit course is Palomar’s transfer-level composition/writing course; the final paper is usually a six- to ten-page research essay in MLA format
 - The English Department’s Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) for English 100 are:
 1. Analyze written arguments.
 2. Write coherent, well-developed analytical essays.
 3. Incorporate source material into at least one research-based essay and apply MLA guidelines for documentation.
 4. Write clear, effective sentences demonstrating sensitivity to language.

- **English 202/Critical Thinking and Composition** – this four-unit course is the second transfer-level course and it focuses on writing about *non-fiction*
 - The English Department’s Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) for English 202 are:
 1. Demonstrate an ability to write analytical essays based on comprehension and interpretation of primary and secondary texts.
 2. Analyze and synthesize information and arguments from a variety of texts, including scholarly sources, to develop research-based essays in MLA form.

- **English 203/Critical Thinking and Composition through Literature** – this four-unit course is the second transfer-level course and it focuses on writing about *fiction and literature*
 - The English Department’s Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) for English 203 are the same as they are for English 202:
 1. Demonstrate an ability to write analytical essays based on comprehension and interpretation of primary and secondary texts.
 2. Analyze and synthesize information and arguments from a variety of texts, including scholarly sources, to develop research-based essays in MLA form.

- **Literature classes** – the English Department’s literature classes are all three units
 - The English Department’s Student Learning Outcome (SLO) for all of its literature classes is
 1. Demonstrate the ability to analyze literary texts by using close-reading skills.

G. General Guidelines for Tutoring Sessions

- **When you meet with students, be mindful of the stages of the writing process:**
 - prewriting ~ generating ideas: freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, researching, observing; organization/outline; ideas; purpose; thesis; topic sentences
 - writing ~ an initial/rough draft
 - revising ~ global revision (the big picture ~ content, organization, tone; thesis; supporting details; sentence-level revision (wordiness, sentence structure /sentence variety, usage)

- **Professionalism** ~ report to work on time; call beforehand if prevented from working and send a follow-up email; keep your voice down; tidy up your workstation; never write any part of a student's paper; never comment negatively to students about a teacher's methods/assignments/personality/grading policies; don't guess at the grade the paper may get; don't criticize the grade that the teacher has given a paper
- **Various roles of the tutor:**
 - ally (sympathetic, encouraging, supportive)
 - coach (the work needs to be the student's own, encourage them to think through problems and find their own answers, suggest ways of accomplishing tasks)
 - commentator (describe process and progress in a broader context than the writer might otherwise see)
 - collaborator (sharing ideas with a particularly sharp writer, but don't take over the paper)
 - writing expert (you know more than the student, but it's okay to admit when you don't know something ~ find out the answer)
 - learner (knowing little or nothing about a topic makes you a good audience for a paper – the writer can answer your questions and clarify writing)
- **Working with various learning styles:**
 - visual—point to, circle, highlight, take notes, use color
 - auditory—read aloud, repeat/rephrase instructions, ask writer to paraphrase what you said
 - kinesthetic ~ ask students to do the writing/underlining /highlighting, have students point to material as you talk about, use file cards, use self-stick notes for parts of the paper

G. At the Start of a Tutoring Session

1. Sit side-by-side (you are an ally, not an authoritarian figure)
2. Have a pen, a pad/scrap paper, a handbook, and a dictionary nearby
3. Let the person know something about you; be pleasant and courteous
4. Demonstrate your enthusiasm – you are looking forward to working with the student
5. Explain what it is that writing tutors do

6. Find out the student's reason for coming and the writing assignment (What can I help you with? What assignment are you working on? What are you writing about?); for those of you working on the main campus, the pre-session form that you will be given will contain this information

- If the student doesn't have the course syllabus or assignment sheet, you could ask the student to check the Canvas site for that course to see if those documents have been posted there by the instructor

7. Give the student control of the paper ~ keep the paper in front of the student; let the student read the paper aloud; if at a computer, let the writer control the keyboard; you and the writer will set a tentative agenda for the session

8. As you talk with the writer and look through the assignment, make a list of concerns and items to cover ~ prioritize the list

H. Responding to the Student Paper

1. Use three powerful tools:

1. active listening - what I'm hearing you say is . . . , it sounds like . . .
2. responding as a reader - I'm a little confused here, I get lost here, is that what you meant, can you tell me more here, so what/why does anyone need to know about that)
3. be a naïve reader ~ act like you need more information all the time, stop at the end of a paragraph to summarize/explain what you anticipate will follow, use silence/wait time to indicate that the writer is expected to think and arrive at answers on his/her own

2. Avoid negative comments about a writer's topic ~ writer may have personal reasons for it

3. Honor the confidentiality of the tutoring relationship (don't comment on or discuss writer or the paper with teacher or in front of other people)

4. Don't overload/overwhelm the student ~ prioritize (work on the big problems first) *

5. Use opening questions: What works best in your paper? What do you like best or feel most satisfied about? What works least in the paper? Which part did you have trouble writing? Which parts don't feel right?

6. Try tri-level response:
 - first-level response ~ respond like an ordinary reader ("I'm confused ~ explain this")
 - second-level response ~ express your reaction as a reader and explain the reasons for your reactions ("I got lost here because you did not indicate clearly enough the relationships between these two statements")
 - third-level response ~ suggest how to solve the problem
7. Be positive – praise where you can
8. Be honest – limit compliments to specific parts of the paper
9. Do not rewrite the paper – circle wrong words rather than replacing them (same with punctuation)
10. Consider using checklists – strengths/focus/organization/argument/support/style/grammar, punctuation, spelling
11. Give the writer a chance to solve a problem before you offer specific solutions
12. Have comments in the margin ~ make sure they are legible, avoid terse comments like awkward/unclear

I. Concluding the Session

1. Summarize the ideas for revision ~ have positive as well as negative
2. Ask the student if he/she has additional questions
3. Remind the writer he/she can return to the Writing Center with another draft
4. Be friendly as you say goodbye

J. Specific Student Problems

1. Lacks a complete draft ~ ask *why*?
2. Isn't sure of the assignment ~ review the assignment with the writer
3. Can't get started ~ discuss strategies for fighting it (break down into smaller pieces, rewards, shut out the voice of criticism, freewrite /brainstorm/cluster); use structured

questioning (if it is a character analysis, ask, “Who is the main character? What is her or his problem? Does she or he solve it?”)

4. Has difficulty in reading ~ go over the text together

5. Has a passive/unresponsive attitude:

- empathize (you too have been in the same position, having to accomplish some task in college which you did not relish)
- acknowledge the student’s lack of interest in writing (I hate to write ~ you say, well, okay, but the fact that you came here means you want to get a decent grade, right?)
- help the student talk about his/her fears (“I’m a terrible writer” ~ you say, “I wish I had a dollar for every student who makes that statement”)
- if too distracted – ask if there's something more pressing and if the answer is yes, recommend person reschedules be patient
- remind the writer you are there to help
- make the session short but helpful
- engage the writer as much as possible
- recognize even your best efforts may not change writer’s attitude

6. Has antagonistic attitude ~ be patient; allow writer to vent; acknowledge the anger, if writer becomes verbally aggressive, politely tell him/her you're not willing to accept such behavior; remind writer your suggestions can be accepted or rejected

7. Has examples of plagiarism ~ become familiar with the school's code of academic integrity, explain importance of carefully taking notes from sources, realize some writers concentrate on content rather than citing, explain that acknowledging sources is an ethical issue, speak with Writing Center Director if unsure how to handle it

8. Has writing anxiety ~ present yourself as a sympathetic ally, tell of your own writing frustrations and satisfaction of producing a well-written paper, explain the writing process (start soon, allow plenty of time), help writer break the assignment into a sequence of specific/ manageable tasks and set up a schedule to complete these parts, suggest that writer sets firm writing appointments with self and build in rewards, remind writer that a rough draft is rough

9. Brings in a longer paper ~ break into smaller, more easily achievable tasks; ask the writer to prioritize the writing difficulties, ask the writer to identify a manageable portion of the paper with these difficulties; don't feel obligated to get through the whole paper

10. Comes in at the last minute before paper is due ~ be kind and sympathetic, consider other options, help set goals for future paper

K. Things to Check

1. The draft meets all the objectives of the assignment (a student may omit part of the assignment)
2. The paper has a strong thesis (may be too general or buried too deep in the body of paper); if not, suggest the student review the keywords of the assignment (compare, argue,...); help the student clarify his/her ideas about the topic; explain that the introductory paragraph should address these ideas
3. There is depth to the paper ~ enough support (facts, stories, examples, . . .)
4. The essay is organized ~ time, space, order of importance; have a student list main points/do outline after writing the draft
5. The writer avoids stylistic problems ~ the choice of words (formal, informal, colloquial, academic), wordiness; other elements of academic style (no contractions, no colloquial language, no use of "I think/I feel")
6. The writer has edited for grammar/punctuation/spelling problems – read aloud; point out problem once, then let student find same problem later; explain that such errors distract readers from the paper's content; be flexible with your vocabulary (fused/run-on)
7. The paper avoids inappropriate topics/offensive language – be patient, remind writer he/she is writing for an academic community, respond as a reader, asked the writer to respond as a reader (imagine yourself as a member of your audience ~ how might you respond to this statement), show writer how to make language more flexible, suggest student should check with teacher about the topic/use of language if he/she insists on doing it his/her own way

L. Tutoring Special Students

1. Nonstandard dialect and ESL students ~ standard American English is the dialect of the American academic world, other institutions, and businesses which require formal written English
 - always remain aware of the writer's feelings – refer to usage as "inappropriate" rather than "wrong" or "incorrect"
 - ESL students are not hampered by psychological barriers of those who speak nonstandard dialects
 - ESL student may be reluctant to ask you a question, to admit he/she doesn't understand something, may require different personal space

- ESL student may have a different way of presenting information (indirect)
- Strategies – give directions plainly, ask the person to explain what you have said, rephrase the comments if the student doesn't understand rather than raising your voice to repeating the same words, use a simple dictionary, brush up on your grammar, watch for peculiar connotations, watch for plagiarism (in some cultures borrowing from other sources is okay), give sympathy and encouragement, rephrase comments that confuse students, noticed student expressions and body language, be patient, respond first to the content and organization rather than sentences, realize some writers may regard you as an expert and expect you to provide the answers, don't overwhelm with a lot of advice, take special care to establish a comfortable rapport, give directions plainly – watch expression and ask questions to see if he/she comprehends your explanations, ask him or her to explain what you have said or to give you an example, it may be helpful for you to serve as a scribe – jot down key words or phrases in the writer's words, don't focus only on mechanical errors

2. Students lacking basic writing skills – these students focus on personal content, they rely on clichés, they're unfamiliar with academic writing/ argumentation, they have many errors on the sentence level, or they don't know how to support their points

- Strategies – use the same ones as with ESL/second dialect student: identify group of similar errors rather than individual ones, try to understand the reasons for the errors – the person either lacks knowledge or is using an invented system of writing, respect student's intelligence, be supportive/respectful/patient/encouraging, acknowledge what the writer does well, help person understand the writing process starts with messiness (he/she doesn't have to produce perfectly formed ideas from the start), have writer read the paper aloud, do not overwhelm writer with too much information or too many suggestions, developed a strategy for the writer to cope with problems

3. Students with learning disabilities – if the student admits a problem and you are not successful with him/her, refer to person on campus who can deal with learning disabilities; ask what you can do that will best help the writer – teach to a writer's favored learning style; be patient and repeat if necessary; make lists or outlines or notes that could later help the writer; support and praise often

4. Returning students – they are often disciplined and organized, many have a greater tolerance for criticism; however, some may lack confidence and have anxiety about starting over

- Strategies – don't talk down to older student; tutor who is an adult learner can be successful here; begin by asking some questions to break the ice; see if writer

wants comprehensive reviews of errors; be considerate of their time, be sensitive to their anxiety, be aware of age differences and your demeanor, help writers use real-world experience appropriate to his/her academic paper; set the agenda and summarize the session (person may be very goal oriented); do not allow the adult learner to become too dependent on your help

5. Good student writers

- Strategies – find out what the student is hoping to accomplish through the writing assignment beyond a grade since he/she may view the writing as a creative act; ask if the person can think of other possible strategies for making the paper even more effective; check for the clarity of the argument (coherence can make a difference in grades); check for style ~ parallelism, interesting word choice, creative openers and conclusions; identify and discuss particularly strong passages

M. Students from Classes Other than English

The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors includes useful checklists for the following types of assignments (page numbers refer to the fifth edition):

1. Research papers (p. 88)
2. Lab reports and scientific papers (p. 89)
3. Argument or position papers (p. 90)
4. Literature papers (p. 91)
5. Book/film/play reviews (p. 91-92)
6. PowerPoint presentations (p. 92-93)
7. Resumes (p. 94-96)
8. Cover letters (p. 96)
9. Essays of application (p. 98)

N. Instructor Expectations

1. If tutoring in a field that is new to you, try to become familiar with instructor expectations regarding format/style/documentation of that field
2. Understand the instructor's criteria for an "A" paper
3. Try to meet with instructors who routinely send their students to the Writing Center
4. Check to see if instructor has sent the Writing Center a list of assignments/criteria sheet

O. Unclear/Poorly Designed Assignments

1. Sometimes the page limit will be unrealistic given what the student is asked to accomplish in the assignment
2. Other assignments may require students to write about unfamiliar subjects
3. If the above are the case, you may want to ask the director to contact the instructor
4. Suggest to the student he/she should check with the instructor after class

P. For Further Help

1. Check out the website for the International Writing Centers Association (writingcenters.org)
2. This organization publishes *Writing Center Journal* and *Writing Lab Newsletter*

Q. Good Questions for Tutors to Think about

1. See page 115-118 in *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* (fifth edition)
2. Discuss with other tutors or Jeannette or Leanne if you have questions

R. English 50/50A Final Exam Rubric

The following categories describe typical characteristics of papers at five levels of competence, not all the criteria by which papers will be judged. Because no essay will fit uniformly into a single category, the grader must judge which category BEST DESCRIBES a particular paper. Evaluation will take into account that the essays were written within a two-hour time frame, not a more extended period of drafting and revision.

5 (A)— Superior/Excellent

Critical Thinking: a thoughtful, in-depth argument, developed through the use of compelling examples and other kinds of support.

Structure: clear organization with effective thesis statement, topic sentences, and transitions.

Sentences: sophisticated structure, demonstrating a command of subordination and parallelism.

Vocabulary: employs precise choices.

Grammar: contains very few errors, showing a mastery of the conventions of written English.

4 (B)—Strong/More than competent

Critical Thinking: a good response, developed with strong examples and other kinds of support.

Structure: clear organization with an identifiable thesis and topic sentences within an overall coherent organization.

Sentences: while sentence structure may be less complex than a “5” paper, it is still effective.

Vocabulary: appropriate choices, but may lack the precision of a “5.”

Grammar: may contain a few agreement, sentence structure, punctuation, or capitalization errors, but overall observes conventions of written English.

3 (C)—Competent

Critical Thinking: while some support may lack relevance, still responds to prompt; may be repetitive.

Structure: writer recognizes principles of organization, but thesis may be ineffective and topic sentences inconsistent. Some paragraphs may lack unity.

Sentences: usually possesses a simpler structure than above categories, but still adequate.

Vocabulary: generalized vocabulary, lacking the precision associated with the above categories.

Grammar: contains some minor errors in mechanics and punctuation, and perhaps one or two more distracting agreement and sentence structure errors.

2 (D)—Weak/inadequate

Critical Thinking: often displays some repetition and inadequate development. Parts may not respond to prompt.

Structure: may have significant problems with thesis, topic sentences, and coherence.

Sentences: a fair number of awkward sentences; lacks subordination and parallelism.

Vocabulary: too general. Some words may be used inappropriately.

Grammar: often contains enough serious errors to be distracting.

1 (F)-Incompetent

Critical Thinking: may fail to respond to prompt, lack development, or be too brief.

Structure: logical organization is often completely lacking. May lack or have inappropriate thesis and topic sentences.

Sentences: are often overly simple or have confusing structure with excessive coordination.

Vocabulary: very basic with words used inappropriately.

Grammar: contains many distracting errors, often making the meaning difficult to determine.

Note for tutors: Each final exam essay is read by two different instructors and is graded on a scale of 0-5. The two scores are added together to determine the grade on the exam.