



# The Writing Center Newsletter

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## Online Writing Genres

By Jill Olthouse, WC Tutor

Just as there are many different types of academic writing, there are many types of online writing. Previously, online writing genres did not overlap academic and professional genres. Increasingly, however, students find their distance-learning teachers assigning online writing assignments, and instructors find that students' online writing conventions bleed into their academic assignments. The following "field guide" should help both instructors and students navigate different types of online writing.

- **Blogs:** Blogs focus on the authors' observations, with reader commentary of secondary importance. A blog is updated frequently in order to address the latest in politics, fashion, or the author's personal life. Personal bloggers may post under a hidden identity to an audience other than their family and friends, or they may post to *only* their family and friends, using privacy settings provided by social networking sites. Either way, there is still a risk that the blogs will develop an "unintended audience," so bloggers do well to post judiciously. Students blogging for a DL course are advised to self-edit, focusing their postings on their interpretations of the texts and things they have learned in class.
- **Wikis:** A wiki allows a variety of users to edit the same document. Having one central wiki eliminates the need to email paper versions back and forth, and wikis can also incorporate photos, video, and weblinks. To avoid fights over edits, make sure group members know what they do and do not have permission to edit, and/or give one editor administrative privileges.
- **Zines:** Webzines are online magazines that trace their roots back to hand-made, photocopied fanzines. Independent zines have a political bent, emphasize subjectivity, and engage readers in activism.
- **Hypertexts:** A hypertext branches off along many different paths. "Hypertext fiction" is a complex version of the "choose your own adventure" story – a story that branches off into many possible plots and endings.

In general, characteristics of online writing include a blurring between the role of reader and writer. Online texts are conversations in which graphics, animation, and sound produce a collage effect. Personal disclosure and non-conventional grammar are hallmarks of informal online writing, and students need to be aware that these features may not be appropriate for online academic and professional writing.

## Did You Know...

Writing Center tutors are available to give ten to fifteen minute presentations to classes about the services we offer. Instructors who are interested in scheduling a Writing Center presentation can call us at 419-530-4939 or email Anthony Edgington at [anthony.edgington@utoledo.edu](mailto:anthony.edgington@utoledo.edu).



## Focus on Faculty: Dr. Martha Kransdorf

By Jennifer Baranek, WC Tutor

Having the ability to write clearly is a skill that is necessary for all majors, not merely the English major. All students must be able to express their ideas in a way that others can understand. The University of Toledo offers many classes that have a focus on writing. Dr. Martha Kransdorf, a lecturer in the College of Education, has been teaching the importance of good writing skills in her classes. Dr. Kransdorf has been at the University of Toledo for the past seven years, teaching Schooling in Democratic Society and Theory and Social Foundations. Dr. Kransdorf has helped many student teachers and pre-student teachers to learn concepts in teaching. She started her teaching in the New York State school district and in prison systems.

In Dr. Kransdorf's classes, multiple choice tests are not an option. By using only essay tests, her students are

enabled to get in touch with what they learn. They must be able to reiterate what they learned in their own words. Numerous essays are assigned, each encouraging students to explore the different types of sources they can use in their papers.

Dr. Kransdorf feels as though university education prepares students for being lifelong learners. One will have to be able to write well in many different aspects of life. Writing is still a primary means of communication. People must be able to articulate their thoughts to avoid a misunderstanding. Teachers must be able to write clearly to communicate with colleagues and supervisors. One's writing represents and speaks for oneself. So one would want it to speak well. Numerous typos and careless mistakes are not how one would want to come across in a professional

atmosphere.

Improving one's skill at writing is an ongoing process at which one should always be working. Students can improve their writing skills by working hard on proofreading. Reading a paper aloud, in Dr. Kransdorf's opinion, is a great trick that can help a student catch mistakes. Writing a clear thesis statement gives a purpose to the paper as well as a map which one should follow. Many students mistake the difference between informal and formal writing in their papers. With new technology, proper writing habits tend to fade away. Students would not want to write a formal paper as they text, email, or instant message each other.

## Making a Good First Impression: *How to Write an Effective Introduction*

By Brittany Pesich, WC Tutor

First impressions make a lasting impression. This famous statement can apply to just about anything. For instance, you find yourself cruising through the dining hall and your eyes immediately wander to the pizza section; there, a piece of pizza rests with cheese dripping from its warm body and sauce bubbling under the blanket of cheese. Your mouth starts watering, and your stomach growls so that everyone in the line is aware of your hunger. The pizza left a good first impression on you.

However, if the pizza looked like it chilled there for hours, such as AVI pizza, you would probably just bail and choose a hamburger instead. Much like the pizza, your paper's introduction will make the first impression for the rest of your paper.

To make a good first impression, the introduction needs to have an "attention-getter," meaning that it needs to be interesting. Instead of jumping right into the topic, I try to spice my intro up by starting it out with an anecdote, also known as a short story. By relating the topic of your paper to a fun anecdote, you will entertain the reader, who will then become interested in your topic. For this article, I used a dining hall anecdote to relate my ideas to something relevant to college students.

If the anecdote idea is not working, you can use a different approach. Starting your paper with a quotation, an interesting fact, or an explanation of a term used in the paper,

can also effectively catch the readers' attention.

After utilizing the attention-getter, you must connect that idea to your topic. The bridge from attention-getter to the subject of the paper is a crucial part of the introduction. The connection allows the attention-getter to transition into the topic, and it validates the attention-getter's existence.

Once you transition to your topic, provide the reader with a sufficient amount of background information. There should be enough information so that the reader has a basic understanding of the subject of the paper. Finish the introduction with your thesis statement, which will be the last sentence in your introduction.

## Message from the Director

By Anthony Edgington, Associate Director of the Writing Center

“The Writing Center is only for struggling students or basic writers.” This is a statement I often hear when speaking with students and faculty from across our campus. Yet, statistics prove otherwise. Many writers who come to the Writing Center are advanced undergraduate or graduate students. Many of these students are skilled writers, but need assistance in working with a new type of genre or help in getting started with a paper. Some just want another pair of eyes looking over their texts. Over the last few years, more and more students working at the doctoral level have utilized the Writing Center as they work on grant proposals, dissertations, and other educational and work-related documents. Finally, some members of the university faculty have found working with a professional tutor or one of the directors to be useful as they create articles for journals, editorials for newspapers, or proposals for grants.

At the Writing Center, tutors do work with students struggling to find their voice as a writer, as we are proud of our role in maintaining student retention at the university. But, we are here to serve our entire campus community, including students, staff and faculty members. And, we can help at all stages of the writing process, from talking about how to approach an assignment to helping writers prepare for publication of a text. We are here to serve our writing community; we encourage you to take advantage of our services.

### Writing Center Staff:

**Director:** Dr. Barbara Schneider

**Associate Director:** Dr. Anthony Edgington

**Secretary:** Barbara Baker

**Staff:**

**Professional Tutors:** Russ Sprinkle, Marcia Harrington, Leslie Neuendorff, Holly Greenfield

**Graduate Tutors:** Michael Brooks,, Teri Green, Cristen Bartus, Jill Olthouse, Sheri Benton, Deirdre Perlini

**Undergraduate Tutors:** , Julianne Arthur, Michael Medlen, Nathan Elias, Brittany Pesich, Geoffrey Wykes, Lilyan Moore, Leslie Ann Chambers, Jennifer Baranek, Sara Gosser

**ESL Tutors:** Majd Al-Allaf, Tiffany Avery, Ying Wu, Lijie Zhou, Huihui Liao, Kelly Wherley

**Presentations:** Teri Green

## Writing Website Review: Census Website

By Teri Green, WC Tutor

“A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti.” While Hannibal Lecter may not have appreciated the United State Census Bureau, as a budding researcher in search of verifiable facts and useful comparative statistics, you may find the Census website, at <http://www.census.gov>, a boon.

How many times do you find yourself supporting topic sentences with information from Wikipedia, for example, “teenage pregnancy is on the rise”? Perhaps you are supporting an argument with incomplete information, like “poverty affects primarily the southern states”? Now you can get the data from its source, and it is verifiable and credible, two important factors when using data in research.

The site is very user friendly, and is arranged thematically: People & Households, Business & Industry, Geography, Newsroom, and Special Topics, which includes a link for

teachers and students. Just need facts on America? Go to American FactFinder. Need some information that’s more local? Go to American Community Survey. Would you like a listing of statistics? You can find an area profile with QuickFacts. Not sure how your information may be listed? Use the search function or better yet, Subjects A to Z. If the Census Bureau is not the original disseminator of data, they will refer you to the appropriate source, like the National Center for Health Statistics for birth data.

By the way, did you know that not only is teenage pregnancy not on the rise, but since its peak in 1991 has fallen 34% for the 15-19 year age group to 40.5 per 1000? As for poverty, fully 20 states have poverty rates that exceed the U.S. average of 13%, and of those states, only 6 fall under the category of southern states. Keep the census site bookmarked and the next time you tackle a research paper, you will be armed with the facts.





**Writing Center**  
**1005 Carlson**  
**Library**  
**Hours: Monday-**  
**Thursday 10-8pm**  
**Friday 10-5pm**  
**Phone: 419-530-4939**



## Writing Center Tutors

By: **Katie Arnold, Graduate Assistant**

Many University of Toledo undergraduates, graduates, and faculty visit the writing center every year. They meet with tutors who are dedicated to improving the writing skills of their tutees. While all of the tutors are knowledgeable and trained on various writing strategies, there are four types of tutors employed by The Writing Center to help those with specialized needs.

- *Undergraduate tutors* are all trained in various writing strategies to help writers with development and organization in their papers.
- *English as Second Language Tutors* (ESL tutors) are trained to help ESL students with language barriers when it comes to their written work. They can also help with reading and comprehension work if it is necessary.
- *Graduate tutors* have some experience teaching, which helps them to identify problems in papers. While undergraduate tutors and graduate tutors do many of the same things, graduate tutors work primarily with graduate students.
- *Professional tutors* are tutors that hold advanced MA or PHD degrees. They often serve graduate students and faculty, although able to work with students at any level with their writing.

The Writing Center tutors have backgrounds in different areas so that they can meet the needs of a diverse community of writers. No matter what needs or concerns are brought to the Writing Center, the knowledgeable and diverse staff is able to meet them.

## An Interview with Leslie Neuendorff, Professional Tutor

By **Marcia Harrington, WC Tutor**

Leslie Neuendorff is one of a limited number of professional tutors on staff at the Writing Center. Professional tutors are those who hold advanced degrees and/or have professional experience.

*What is your history at U.T.'s Writing Center?*

Leslie: I've been tutoring for about 20 years. During that time the Writing Center has been in three locations, ending up with the office we are in now on the first floor of Carlson Library. Our use of technology has changed considerably over that time.

*What is your educational/professional background?*

Leslie: My parents were both writers, and I followed in their footsteps getting a degree in Journalism from Michigan State University. I worked on a daily newspaper in Michigan before my kids were born and also spent some time editing a membership tabloid for a non-profit organization before coming to UT.

*What students and clients (for example, faculty, undergraduate and graduate students or ESL students) have you worked with, in terms of what college they attend and assignment assignments they've brought to you?*

Leslie: Over the years, I've worked with a wide range of people, from freshmen writing their first college paper to faculty finishing up graduate work or writing articles for publication. One of the things that makes this work so satisfying is the variety in the disciplines the writers come from. One student may be reviewing a thesis on thin film solar cells while the next may be analyzing a novel. In addition to the variety in subjects, the writers come in at all stages of the writing process, from brainstorming to working on organization to learning where to put the commas.

For more information about the  
Writing Center, see our website:  
[www.utoledo.edu/centers/  
writing\\_center](http://www.utoledo.edu/centers/writing_center)