Graduate Writing Skills

Strategies for Success in Graduate School and Beyond

Graduate Student Orientation
Spring 2013
Prior to graduate school...

'I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say'
Knowledge Telling

Issues reduced to simplest denominators

Comprehensive, yet broad, reports

Teacher as primary audience

Direct quotation and paraphrase

Simple argumentation and some analysis
Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as ‘quite an improvement.’

http://www.cellbiochem.ca/publications.html
Knowledge Making

- Enter existing conversation by publication or presentation
- Sound argumentation and thorough analysis
- Peers in field as primary audience
- Summary and synthesis
- Introduce new knowledge and offer meta-commentary
New Expectations: Faculty

Assigning course work
• may or may not provide detailed, step-by-step instructions for a paper or presentation

Reviewing your work
• may or may not offer extensive feedback
• may only review at pre-determined stages

Supporting publication efforts
• may or may not offer info on opportunities
New Expectations: Scholars

- Navigating procedures
- Initiating research
- Understanding degree/discipline expectations*
- Conferencing with faculty/advisors
- Managing tasks and project timelines
- Establishing writing/research schedule
CRAP* Test

**Currency**
Is the source recent enough to matter for your topic and discipline?

**Reliability**
Is the information trustworthy?
Evidence? Opinion?

**Authority**
What are the author’s credentials?
Does he or she have standing in your discipline?
Is the publication recognized in your field?

**Purpose**
What is the intent of the article?

*Based on the original CRAP TEST created by Librarian Molly Beestrum, Dominican University*
Creating a Space for Yourself

- Claiming centrality
- Making topic generalizations
- Reviewing previous research

Establishing a niche
- Counter-claiming
- Indicating a gap
- Raising questions
- Continuing a tradition

Occupying the niche
- Outlining purposes
- Announcing present research
- Announcing principal findings

Establishing a territory

Entering the Conversation*

Material based on the book *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
Go Back to the Basics

YOUR THESIS IN 3 MINUTES:

WHY YOU’RE DOING IT

HOW YOU’RE DOING IT

HOW IT RELATES TO THE REAL WORLD
Thank You and Remember...

Be Proactive

Get organized and stay organized

Seek out and utilize relevant resources
Resources

• Your Advisor!
• Journal articles in your discipline
• University Libraries
  – http://www.utoledo.edu/library/
• The Writing Center
  – http://www.utoledo.edu/centers/writingcenter/
• College of Graduate Studies
  – http://www.utoledo.edu/graduate/
Library Services

• University Libraries
  – Ask a librarian
  – Subject liaison librarians
  – LibGuides
  – OhioLINK
  – Research databases and online journals
  – Services just for Graduate Students