

Writing in Graduate School

Students in graduate programs are typically expected to know how to write. However, students new to graduate programs are generally unfamiliar with practices related to writing for a new academic community, which can cause some anxiety and present new, even unexpected problems. The strategies below have proven to help students develop understanding of academic writing and build confidence in their own writing.



One-to-One Conversations

Entering a new discourse community involves new communicative practices and attending to new audience expectations in reading, writing, and research. Participating in different kinds of conversations about disciplinary content with classmates and professors, students are introduced to these communicative practices—not just disciplinary content. In the writing center, for example, where students engage in one-to-one conversations about their writing, they can begin to recognize and appreciate the value of substantive communicative practices that include feedback necessary for their development as scholars. More than 80% of students working on dissertations find one-to-one conversations about their writing most helpful (Roger, Zawacki, & Baker, 2016).

Reading with Purpose

In your first year, reading assigned texts in your courses with attention to *how* they are written, as well as the information presented, can provide an opportunity for you to observe communicative practices in your field. As you read, notice how, for example, authors articulate their purpose, signal their own argument, or extend the argument of others. Notice what you like about their writing, or what leaves you confused. Talking about what you notice with your professors and classmates can also provide you with critical tools as you begin your own writing.

Seeking Feedback

Conversations with professors and classmates about texts and in response to texts position you to recognize the role feedback plays as you also develop effective communication practices. Seeking feedback in class provides opportunities for you, as a reader, to deepen your understanding of content and, as a writer, to develop ideas for research projects. The **Richard Wright Center** provides another place on campus where you can seek feedback on your assignments, ideas, and disciplinary conventions related to documentation and style.

Purposeful conversations that focus on your ideas and writing issues related to purpose of writing, audience expectations, and disciplinary conventions will **allow you to build critical awareness** as a writer and can lead to positive experiences with writing at the graduate level.