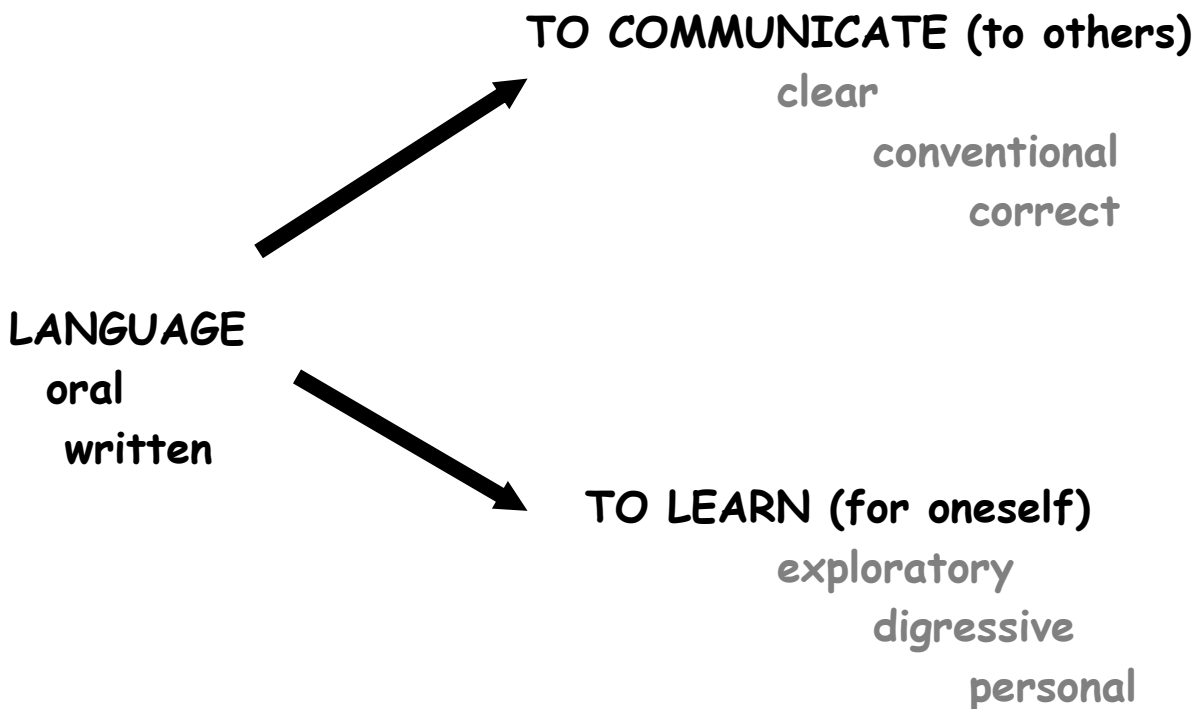


WORKSHOP HANDOUTS

The following pages are copies of overhead projection transparencies used in workshops. Some speak for themselves, while others may be less clear to instructors who have not attended the workshop. **Toby Fulwiler, University of Vermont.** Questions? Please e-mail me directly at [<toby.fulwiler@uvm.edu>](mailto:toby.fulwiler@uvm.edu).

1. Graphic illustration of the two major roles played by writing in college and university settings. Most instructors make assignments requiring only communicative writing, in one draft, neglecting to ask students to practice the more informal writing that helps writers figure out what they really want to say in the first place.



WRITING TO LEARN

THE ROLES OF WRITING IN COLLEGE

The more you write about something, the better you learn it.

WRITING to Learn

Posing and solving problems (e.g. exercises)

Thinking critically (e.g. reading responses)

Understanding self & subjects (e.g. journals)

Focusing & figuring out (lists, clusters, sketches)

Recording observations (e.g. field notebooks)

Taking notes & keeping records (e.g. class notebooks)

WRITING to Communicate

Composing formal papers & reports

Writing personal essays & memoirs

PRIVATE WRITING TO ONESELF

PURPOSES

- to figure things out
- to think & speculate
 - to pose & solve problems
 - to reflect & imagine
 - to record, document, & remember

FORMS

- notes, sketches, & diagrams
- journals, notebooks, & diaries
 - letters & e-mail to close friends
 - early drafts of formal writing
 - margin writing in texts

FEATURES

- informal style (*contractions, fragments*)
- cross-outs & mistakes & corrections
- first-person pronouns
- vague context
- language shortcuts (*w/, etc.*)
- more dashes than semi-colons

WRITING-TO-LEARN ASSIGNMENTS

Specific activities that need to count, but not be graded in a qualitative manner so that risk-taking is encouraged: students receive credit for simply doing the work.

*FREEWRITING

--free, focused, loop, blind

*INVENTION EXERCISES

*--lists, outlines, clusters,
reporter's questions*

*JOURNALS

*--lab & field notebooks, learning logs
commonplace books, workbooks, notebooks*

*LETTERS

*--student/teacher, student/student,
paper, electronic, authentic/fictive*

*REVISING

--early drafts, focused drafts

Using Journals in Class

- 1. To start discussions**
- 2. To focus attention**
- 3. To summarize lessons**
- 4. To re-orient lost classes**
- 5. To solve language problems**
- 6. To respond to readings, films, and speakers**
- 7. To generate paper topics and research projects**
- 8. To speculate about observations, data and information**
- 9. To create personal dialogue with students**
- 10. To monitor class progress (teacher and student)**
- 11. To let off steam . . .**
- 12. To relax and enjoy writing**
- 13. To record intellectual and emotional growth**

How Journals Help Class

- 1. Increase student confidence**
- 2. Increase oral responses**
- 3. De-center authority**
- 4. Encourage independent thought**
- 5. Affirm affective domains**
- 6. Reduce grade pressure**
- 7. Replace quizzes, tests, papers and talk**
- 8. Monitor class progress**

GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNING JOURNALS

Diary ----- *Journal* ----- *Class Notebook*
(I) (I + subject) (subject-centered copy book)

- Use in class
- Ask good questions
- Suggest *'letter-writing voice'*
- Keep one yourself
- Write when students write
- Share when students share
- Explain form: date/day/time
- Consider: *bound, loose leaf, double-entry*
- Consider names: *journal, daybook, workbook, lab or field notebook, commonplace book, log, learning log . . .*

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING JOURNALS

- Treat as *low-stakes* writing
- Consider student territory
- Suggest informal style
- Allow the right to be wrong
- Read, don't pry
- Count, don't grade
Number of entries, pages, pounds, gimme-points, etc.
- Look for quality markers
Questions, first-person, conjecture, etc.
- Respond with questions & kindness, pencil & post-it notes

WRITING TO LEARN

Journal prompts from mathematics professor useful in any discipline. In my teaching poetry, for instance, I've asked students to "write about the lines you don't understand" in a given poem, after which a profitable discussion has always ensued.

WRITING PROBES

Ideas to help you form your thoughts as you are writing.

General Probes

- What are you thinking?
- Can you say more about that?
- Explain that so that a fifth grader would understand it.
- Write that again in a different way.
- Are you sure about that?
- Check the accuracy of that last step.
- What were you thinking about to get that?
- What did you mean by "it"?
- Label that step so you can refer to it.
- What does that X stand for?
- What does that equation say in plain English?
- Could you draw a picture of that?
- Why did you write that equation?
- Tell why that last step makes sense.

When You Are Stuck

- Why are you stuck?
- What other information do you need to get unstuck?
- How can you get needed information?
- Do you need to go back and review some of your steps?
- What makes this problem difficult?

When You Think You Are Finished

- Do you have other ideas that you have not written about?
- What were you thinking about when you did step X?
- How can you show that you did this correctly?
- Could this have been done another way (more eloquently)?

Russel W. Kenyon
University of Massachusetts

WRITING TO LEARN

Journal prompts assigned in Introductory Physics class of sixty students prior to lecture & discussed during weekly discussion section; note requirement to write in lay language to different audiences.

A LISTING OF JOURNAL ENTRY TOPICS FOR A GENERAL PHYSICS I, FALL SEMESTER 1984, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA, BY VERNOR JENSEN.

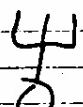
- 9/21 Explain Newton's 3rd Law, including examples from the real world.
- 9/24 Explain what friction is, including why it is sometimes helpful and sometimes a nuisance.
- 9/26 Describe the concept of momentum to your kid brother.
- 9/28 Explain why (in event of a collision) the passenger in a smaller car is more likely to be injured in the interaction with a large car.
- 10/1 Contrast the differences and similarities of rotational motion and translational motion.
- 10/3 Explain to your mother why water stays in a pail when swung in a vertical circle around her head.
- 10/15 What is your understanding of the Law of Conservation of Energy?
- 10/17 Describe to your Dad the physics related to machines.
- 10/22 Explain why deserts get hot while islands at the same latitude remain temperate.
- 10/24 Describe the demonstrations you saw today on systems of heat transfer.
- 10/29 Explain to your younger brother why blowing across your soup or a cup of hot chocolate cools it--include at least two reasons.
- 10/31 Discuss the net effect of leaving the refrigerator door open.
- 11/5 Describe your understanding of a gas (as compared to liquids and solids).
- 11/7 Explain the concept of the kinetic theory of molecules.
- 11/9 Discuss how heat energy can be converted to other forms of energy.
- 11/12 Explain to a little child why some things float and some things sink in water.


WRITING TO LEARN

Anonymous student question submitted to professor at end of large lecture class where student solves own problem, but apparently wants to thank professor for opportunity for doing so. The act of writing out problem seems to have triggered solution to problem. Aha!

CHEMISTRY 1ST YEAR COLLEGE
Student question dropped in Question Box.

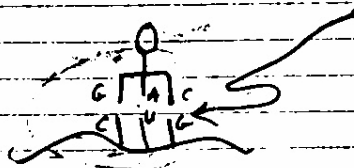
40 -

when the tRNA  hooks

up to the mRNA 

What happens? Does the tRNA
leave or replicate? How
does the chain - oh I get
that - the peptide bond.

essentially what is happening
right @ the pt. of



Thanks

WRITING TO LEARN

Instructor letter written back to class of twenty students who each wrote him a letter earlier handed in last class. Weekly letter exchange between students and professor provides informal, non-judgmental communication about matters related to class and subject matter. In classes where letter assignments are used, sense of community develops rapidly. Paper letters more effective than electronic ones. Quantitative assessment.

November 18, _____

Dear Classmates,

Many of your letters this week forecast the end of the term, the end of school assignments for a while, the relief that entails & yet acknowledge the hard push yet ahead to arrive at that state of assignment-less grace. For instance, Sarah writes: "Are we going to do another story portfolio? I am trying to figure out my schedule between now and the end of semester--eleven papers to complete in the next few weeks."

To which I need repeat, Sarah, yes, the whole idea of the mid-term story portfolio was to provide practice, a preview, a set of expectations for you to meet come term's end. So, in reading your final portfolio, I intend to browse through your drafts, but read your story portfolio more critically and carefully.

Melissa--I'm excited to see how our class book comes out...really curious about what other people have written.

Joy--I find myself more interested in what people in our class are writing than in established writers.

Gwen--I am excited...

December 3, _____

Dear Classmates,

Thanks for your last letters. Collectively, you've brought up a number of things that need attending to in my own last letter: How about I ask you some questions back?

Liz--it's fun to go back and re-read things with the insight gained in this class. the craft and purpose are much clearer in everything read.

Jeremy--I have also become a better reader... reading another student's paper... being able to come up with concrete suggestions for improving it... an invaluable addition to the education of a college student--even one who only wants to go to Graceland.

A number of my literature colleagues here at Vermont insist that the best training in writing is reading--lots of reading. Do you think, on the basis of the testimony of Jeremy and Liz, that I can suggest back that the best training for reading is writing?

Shana--Is creative nonfiction appropriate for term papers? I'd like to hear your answers to this one? Could writing creative nonfiction get you in a jam in courses that seem to specific academic assignments? Does it depend on how you do it? What do you think about it? Any experience here?

WRITING TO LEARN

First page of published article describing in detail the use of letters to create a non-threatening, community-building assignment in one small class.

From *Writing to Learn: Strategies for Assigning and Responding to Writing Across the Disciplines*
Edited by Mary eane Sorcinelli and Peter Elbow

Writing Back and Forth: Class Letters

Toby Fulwiler

When people write about anything, they learn more about it. Often, they learn more than they intend—about what they know, what they don't, and where they need to go next. Often, the same draft that answers some questions poses others. Serious writing, in other words, is a dynamic, unpredictable thinking process, seldom a straight line, seldom complete in one draft or sitting. School assignments, however, often cut this complicated process short, asking that one draft or sitting to answer old questions, but not raise new ones. Too often in school writing, stakes are high, the pressure on, the deadline close, but opportunities for dialogue and revision few and far away.

Dear Classmates,

Welcome to "Studies in Composition and Rhetoric." During the semester we'll explore the historical development and current state of teaching writing within the field of English studies. We'll look at selected contemporary issues, including cultural literacy, action research, and writing across the curriculum. Finally, all of us will examine process of our own composing—how we learned it, how we do it, how we change it.

Writing letters back and forth with your students increases dialogue, suggests rethinking, and encourages rewriting, yet the stakes remain low. Weekly letters promote the give and take of learning rather than the finality of testing and measuring.

All letters in this chapter, both mine and the students, are authentic and reproduced with permission; some have been edited for clarity, brevity, or anonymity. My thanks to the students in my graduate seminars from 1993 to 1995 for permission to use their letters in this chapter.