

DON'T FORGET TO

- Schedule an appointment with a **CWE consultant** at www.montclair.edu/cwe
- Become a fan of the **Center for Writing Excellence** on **Facebook**.
- Come visit us this summer!



CWE HOURS SPRING 2010

Monday	10-8
Tuesday	10-8
Wednesday	10-1 2:30-8
Thursday	10-8
Friday	10-5
Sunday	4-8

We're located on the first floor of **Sprague Library** in the far right corner of the **Reference Section**.

CWE Newsletter Co-Editors:
Janet Dengel, Nicole Papaioannou,
Kristen Anderson

The CWE Guide to Surviving Finals

The Spring 2010 semester is winding down, but the pressure is building as finals loom. Here are some general tips to help you survive and thrive during the last weeks of class.

First things first. Before you begin, set yourself up in a comfortable location. It should be a place conducive to studying and writing. It could be the campus or local library, your bedroom or dorm room, or even a quiet bench in the park...wherever you will be able to work without too many distractions. Just make sure it isn't a place where you are too comfortable; after all you don't want to fall asleep!

Stay organized! Disorganization can lead to unnecessary worry and anxiety. There's nothing worse than not being able to locate an assignment, notes, or research. It wastes time, and it's a sure way to

send you in to panic mode. Keep a folder for each project with assignment, notes, research, e-mails from your professor, and a list of ideas. Create a folder for each assignment on your computer desktop to organize electronic files and drafts.

According to the CDC National Sleep Foundation, even a 20 minute nap can make you more alert after a night of cramming.

Prioritize not only by deadlines, but by assignment complexity. Spend your most productive hours tackling the most difficult assignments, and then move on to less intense ones. However, if you find that you are struggling too much over the larger assignment – don't waste time stressing over it. Move on to a

more manageable assignment – you'll feel better crossing something off the list. If you can't even concentrate on a smaller assignment – it's probably time for a short break to refuel your mind and body. Take a walk, eat a snack, call a friend, or take a short nap.

Compromise and negotiate time needed for schoolwork with downtime. Make contracts with yourself to borrow some fun time and devote it to earning a good grade. If you go out Friday night, stay in Saturday to study. You may have to make some seemingly hard decisions (do you go to the family barbecue on Saturday or to the hockey game on Sunday?), but you'll feel less stressed if you only do one activity, rather than both. If you really can't get out of your personal obligations then buckle down as much as possible during the week.

More Tips You Should Know...

- Check out Google Docs – it stores your documents so you can access them any place with an internet connection. In other words, if you left your external USB drive at home – no worries! Another tip, send e-mail reminders to yourself to stay alert about project due dates.
- If you turn on the TV – turn it off after 30 minutes (set the sleep timer). The TV and internet are distraction traps. Your favorite TV show and your Facebook page will still be there after finals are over. Plus, missing a TV show is far less devastating and easier to overcome than failing a final.
- Let your friends and family members know you are busy with finals. Promise to get together after they are over. And, speaking of which, make plans to do something fun after you're done to celebrate finishing the semester! It will give you something to look forward to. You deserve it!

Preparing a Writing Portfolio

Many students are assigned to create a portfolio of work that reflects their growth and progress as writers. At The Center for Writing Excellence, consultants can assist in this process with suggestions on how to rewrite for clarity, polish sentences, and refine ideas. Here are some tips for choosing a paper previously thought to be a final draft and turning it into one that shows even more promise in a portfolio:

- Look through all of your essays for the course: Was there a topic that intrigued you? One you wanted to explore further? Are there questions on the issue you wrote that still are unanswered?
- Think of what you learned about as the course progressed. Often structural tools, methods of analysis, and creative techniques attained during the semester can shed new light on work completed much earlier, be-

fore acquiring your new-found knowledge.

- Reread the professor's comments and suggestions. They can provide a clue to a direction or theme not fully explored. By exploring further, an essay can improve in content.
- Review the central claims of your papers. Is there one that could be strengthened or deepened in scope? Many times, the real point of your essay becomes apparent towards the middle or end of your paper. Pull out that gem of an idea and rework the paper based on the new claim.
- "Analyze more!" This is a comment found on many papers, giving you a clear-cut area to concentrate on during revision. An easy way to do this is to ask "So

what?" after each argument or point made. Go back to the text and the critical reviews in search of support and answers.

- Keep it positive—being critical of your work has its merits, but also ask yourself: What worked in this paper? How can I use that strategy in paragraphs that weren't as clear or persuasive?
- Smooth transitions can add to readability. If you have been told your paper "doesn't flow," try to find a theme, quote, or introduction to new information that will naturally lead to your next paragraph.
- Don't forget to proofread and polish. Spelling and grammar checks won't catch every mistake, and a grammatically correct paper is always more impressive than one with errors.

Summer Writing Activities that Won't Give You Brain Cramps

Summer is a great time to relax and unwind, but it's also a great time to enjoy writing for its own sake, rather than academic purposes. Here are some great ways to keep practicing your writing over the summer:

Make a scrapbook. With digital cameras and Facebook, it's easy to capture your summer on film. Take some pictures wherever you go or ask friends to take them for you, paste them into a scrapbook, and write blurbs to go with them. This way, you'll be practicing writing, and you'll have memories that you can hold on to for the rest of your life.

Keep a journal. Keeping a journal is a great way to capture ideas so that you can go back to them later. Maybe you're going on an overseas vacation and want to keep a record of what you see each day you're away. Maybe you're not going anywhere, but want somewhere to keep your private thoughts. Maybe you're into public

debate and want to make your journal in to a blog. No matter what you write, a journal will always be useful to you.

Write a short story, poem, screen play, or novel. Now that school's out, no one is reading or judging your work but you. Use the time creatively. Write about something that interests you. Did you have an idea in class that you couldn't write into an essay? Why not use it now? Once you're finished, you can even submit it for publication! There are many journals and magazines that publish undergraduate creative writing, such as MSU's *The Normal Review* and the *National Gallery of Writing* (galleryofwriting.org). No matter what your major is, being published looks great on a resume!

Play Scattergories or Scrabble. This isn't exactly writing, but it's absolutely writing related. These games exercise your vocabulary and lateral

thinking skills. Grab some friends and play a couple rounds. You'll probably learn a few new words or at least remember some old ones that you forgot you knew.

Write a letter or send a postcard. Remember the thrill of getting a letter in the mail? Nowadays, it's rare to find anything but bills and catalogs in the mailbox. You might be surprised at how appreciated a hand-written letter can be, even if it's only a few lines long.

Visit the CWE. We'll be open all summer!



Even Rocky visits the Center for Writing Excellence!