

## A Synopsis of English 105: Introduction to College Writing I

*This is what I hope you will take with you as you move on to the next level of writing.*

**1. Write to figure out what you think by giving yourself time to generate several drafts.** When trying to synthesize ideas from many sources and discover the relationships between them, your best thoughts will usually come after intensive work on the topic, and trying to write is often the prep work your brain needs to make these connections. Starting with a set format and then plugging ideas in to fit the form limits the work your brain needs to do. Eventually, though, you need to express those ideas in an organized way to other people, so...

**2. Once you're at the final draft stage, write to your audience.** Realize that you are not writing to fulfill an assignment or complete a task necessary to graduate. You are writing to communicate important ideas to other people. Gauge what your audience already knows and what they need to know about your claim. Use reader-friendly tone by avoiding "you" in academic and professional writing and avoiding announcements of what you're doing such as "in this paper I will..." or "this is about such and such...." Imagine how your reader sees you, what your reader might question or need more information about.

### **Use strategies like these establish credibility and draw your audience in:**

- writing clearly and using accurate information,
- choosing excellent, relevant examples to support your ideas,
- using realistic, specific details rather than generalities or assumptions,
- rather than merely summarizing other people's ideas, writing from your own point of view,
- acknowledging other people's contrasting ideas and discussing them with your own,
- introducing other people when you quote from them, and explaining a concept or thing before you refer to it with a pronoun,
- showing how different sources relate, compare, or contrast, or how you could use them together in an interesting way,
- using sensory details creatively to give your reader a "total body experience,"
- providing a catchy, relevant title, and most importantly,
- keeping a good balance of ethos, pathos, and logos in your writing.

### **Avoid these strategies that push an audience away:**

- writing confusing sentences full of grammatical or spelling errors,
- using logical fallacies that make you look inauthentic or unable to think rationally,
- trying to manipulate readers in your use of extreme examples,
- being too dramatic (and unrealistic) in your choice of adjectives or consequences,
- using bold, italics, underlining, exclamation points, all upper case, or other attempt to communicate emotion
- being unnecessarily rude by mocking, belittling, or negating others' ideas

**3. Write as if what you say will make a difference in the world.** You need to care about what you are saying and show others why it is important. When you make a claim, don't repeat the obvious; say something worth thinking about. A fact that is a new discovery for you is not necessarily a new idea for other people, so always get beyond describing the way a situation is to making an original statement about it. Let your reader know why he or she should care about what you're saying by talking about the implications of your idea. Remember the concept of the "action horizon"—if your idea were put into play, what would be the implications of that? Why should we care about that? What can or should we do about it? How does your idea affect the world?

**4. Say something interesting, and let us know your point right away.** In the American professional world, it's imperative to let your readers know your main point by the time they reach the end of your introduction. Don't wait until the end of your conclusion to finally let them know what you are talking about. Your claim sums up the driving force behind everything else. If you could only say one sentence to get your point across, the claim would be it.

**5. To help guide your readers through the paper, follow the basic conventions of writing:**

- Have an introduction that leads directly to your central claim. You can include a scene setting or other creative introduction before the claim paragraph, but always follow the "hook" openings with an explanation of your topic, your position, your point.
- Use the middle section of your paper to provide the evidence you need to explain and argue your point. If something does not relate to your central claim, don't put it in your paper.
- Make each body paragraph a container for the expression of one main idea, summed up in the topic sentence. This sentence should be a point you are making, not someone else's idea.
- Begin and end all body paragraphs with your own ideas, using these places to transition from the point before to the next one, and to relate bits of evidence to the central claim.
- Conclude by reinforcing the importance and implications of your claim.
- Balance the amount of borrowed and original material. A good ratio is that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the writing should be yours, and only  $\frac{1}{4}$  or less borrowed from others. Otherwise, you are relying too much on summary or quotation, and your own voice and point will be lost.
- Properly cite all borrowed material, whether or not you are using exact words. Exact words must be in quotation marks. Check yourself scrupulously for academic honesty.
- Provide a properly formatted Works Cited page to give full details of the sources in your parenthetical citations.

Best of luck to you all as you move forward. Remember that being able to think and write clearly and well is going to be your best asset in almost every profession or vocation. Keep working on it and never give up.