

Philosophy & Practice

Writing centers have traditionally been friendly, informal places that offer supportive instruction to student writers.

Students often find that going to a writing center for help with a paper is less intimidating than going to their professors because they can ask a tutor questions that they're afraid are "dumb," or admit that they don't understand something. Tutors provide help without evaluating the students they are working with—or their papers.

Students bring in papers from many different disciplines, not just English. We're likely to see assignments from Nursing, History, Philosophy, Business, Criminal Justice—the list goes on. Sometimes a student will ask for help with a paper that is not an assignment—for example, a personal statement or letter of application. We help with these types of writing, too.

Regardless of a student's reason for coming to the Writing Center, we always have these goals:

1. To increase the student's confidence as a writer. We want to help each student feel that he/she can succeed on college-level assignments.
2. To guide the student in learning something that will make him/her a better writer in the long run. This doesn't necessarily mean that the student will leave the Writing Center with a "perfect" paper.

Guiding the learning process is harder to do than "lecturing" or simply making corrections for the student. It requires good listening and question-asking skills—and plenty of patience—but students don't really learn much in the long run from having a tutor "mark up" their papers or do the thinking for them. They learn when they are actively involved.