

Using Writing and Academic Mentors & Peer Writing Tutors in Classes

Just as faculty benefit from having their peers read their work prior to publication, so too, students benefit from having their work read by peers before it is graded. In both cases, the readers bring their experience as writers—of the same sort of works—to their experience as critical readers. Peer Writing Tutors and Writing and Academic Mentors for FYSEs can continue the conversation professors have with their students about writing. Mentors and Peer Writing Tutors do not help students with writing in place of the professor but in addition to the professor. Tutors and Mentors are trained to be the authorized help for students, to ask probing questions about the papers they read, and to make positive suggestions for improvement of those papers.

Sessions work best:

- When the mentor or tutor has a clear idea of the professor's writing expectations for students,
- When students in the class see the sessions with the tutor or mentor as an important part of the writing process for all students in the class, and
- When the professor emphasizes the importance of those sessions by making them mandatory.

Best Practices:

- Meet with your mentor or peer writing tutor early in the semester or before the beginning of the semester and share your syllabus with the tutor or mentor.
- Put the tutor's or mentor's name on the syllabus.
- Make your expectations clear to the mentor or writing tutor and to your class.
- Introduce your writing tutor or mentor to your class.
- Make at least some sessions with the mentor or writing tutor obligatory.
- Encourage your writing tutor or mentor to circulate a list of specific appointment times before meetings.
- Allow your mentor or writing tutor ample time to meet with your students.
- Stay in contact with your writing tutor or mentor through meetings, emails, and phone.

Faculty Speak:

"I have had the tutor in class for writing workshops and also meeting one-on-one with the students outside the class. The combination works well because the tutor knows what I am looking for, and the students trust the tutor."

"I think the one-on one contact was helpful."

"The interaction with the writing tutor makes [students] realize the importance of clarity and coherence . . . I discussed this with the tutor at the beginning of the semester."

"The tutor was very useful as another voice to provide students with feedback . . . I also think that students were able to talk more candidly about the writing process [with the tutor]."

"The individual meetings got good feedback from most students."

"I think that having an independent relationship between the students and the tutor works best."

"The peer writing sessions enable the college writing students to have additional early feedback on an initial draft or key portion of their papers."

"[The writing tutor] can both model a writing process and the importance of giving feedback on writing."

What Should You Expect from a Peer Writing Tutor?

Peer Writing Tutors—Do	Peer Writing Tutors—Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do follow the writing goals faculty set for classes Do communicate with faculty about the progress of students Do appreciate clear communication from faculty Do appreciate receiving the class syllabus Do set up specific appointment times to meet with students Do meet with tutees in public spaces Do help students structure their papers Do work with students on any phase of their writing process Do help students prepare for oral presentations Do assist faculty in writing workshops Do work up to 60 hours a semester with one class Do undergo extensive training and continue training every semester at CTLR Do need to complete work for their own classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't tutor students in content Don't copy edit students' papers Don't hold open office hours Don't teach the class Don't grade papers Don't perform clerical tasks Don't work during final exams or breaks Don't work more than 60 hours a semester

What Should You Expect from a Writing and Academic Mentor in a First-Year Seminar?

Mentors—Do	Mentors—Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do follow writing and academic goals faculty set for classes Do work with students on any phase of their writing process Do work with students on general academic skills including time management and study skills Do work with students on any phase of their oral presentation skill development Do assist faculty in writing workshops Do communicate with faculty about the progress of students Do appreciate clear communication from faculty Do appreciate receiving the class syllabus Do set up specific appointment times to meet with students Do meet with tutees in public spaces Do undergo extensive training and continue training every semester at CTLR Do assist faculty in writing workshops Do work up to 60 hours a semester with one class Do need to complete work for their own classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't tutor students in content Don't copy edit students' papers Don't provide academic advising in place of the faculty Don't grade papers Don't teach the class instead of the faculty Don't work more than 60 hours a semester Don't hold open office hours Don't grade papers Don't work during final exams or breaks

For more detailed information: http://blogs.middlebury.edu/peer_writing_tutors/faculty/

Contact: Mary Ellen Bertolini mbertoli@middlebury.edu (x3182)

Working as a PWT in a CW class or as a FYSM in a FYS

Working with your faculty member:

By the end of the first week of class, you should have already met with the professor teaching the class you are tutoring and learned his or her writing goals and expectations for the class.

Ask for a copy of the syllabus. If you are aware of when papers in the class are due and when the professor is most likely to need you, you can better plan getting work down for your own classes. Make sure to stay in touch with the professor during the semester—either by meetings, e-mails or phone.

Meeting your class:

Early in the semester, make arrangements to introduce yourself to the class. If you are free when the class meets, go to a class meeting. If you are not free then, you could e-mail the class to introduce yourself.

Setting up appointments with your class:

The best way to arrange sessions with the students is by circulating a **list of appointment times for specific appointments** with you. We will not pay you to hold open “office hours” and wait for students to drop by. We do not have the budget to pay you for dead time. Waiting for students to just call when they need you often results in a frustrating game of phone tag, and you may find yourself either underutilized or suddenly swamped mid-semester.

Meet your students in a public place on campus.

Feel free to use the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research (Davis Family Library, Room 225). Starting the second week of the semester, the CTLR will be open Sunday-Thursday until midnight. On Friday, it closes at 5:00 p.m., and it will be closed all day Saturday, and will open again at 7:30 p.m. Sunday night. Tutors, also, frequently use the Grille, Crossroads, Library Café, Axinn Center and MBH for meetings.

Your role in CTLR and the Peer Writing Tutor Program:

Peer Writing Tutors and Mentors assigned to classes come to afternoon training sessions to enhance skills, discuss problems, and share hands-on experience with new tutors. All PWTs and FYSMs attend our Organization meeting. Trained PWTs and FYSMs should check our Training Schedule to see which sessions they must attend. Please fill out and return the mid-semester electronic survey I will send you, and complete an online self-evaluation at the end of the semester. Feel free to call (x3182), drop by (CTLR Lib 225E), or e-mail me (mbertoli@middlebury.edu) with questions, or to suggest that one of your tutees may need to meet with a faculty tutor. The professional staff of CTLR is here to help you and your tutees. Check our weblog: http://blogs.middlebury.edu/peer_writing_tutors/ and follow us on facebook.

Have a wonderful semester working with your class, and thanks for your work at CTLR!

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Guidelines for Peer Writing Tutors and FYSE Mentors

- 1) Peer tutors assigned to writing intensive courses may work up to 60 hours during the semester. Mentors assigned to First-Year Seminars also may work up to 60 hours during the semester. Those hours may be distributed among the following paid activities: attending classes and workshops, attending scheduled meetings with the instructor, conferring with students outside of class time. Scheduled training sessions do not count in the 60-hour limit.
- 2) It is the responsibility of the writing tutor or mentor to keep a record of hours worked and to submit time on Banner and on log sheets every two weeks to the Head Peer Writing Tutor.
- 3) The instructor and the tutor or mentor should meet regularly to share insights and to coordinate their roles and their expectations. Before the tutor or mentor meets with students to confer on writing, both the instructor and the tutor should agree on the tutor's role in the conference, the kinds of comments the tutor should offer, the kinds of feedback the instructor would like at the end of the conferences.
- 4) The instructor should introduce the peer writing tutor or mentor to the class during the first week of the semester and make it clear to the students how and when they should consult with the tutor or mentor. Since the students who most need help are sometimes the most reluctant to seek it, the instructor might make it mandatory for all students to see the writing tutor or mentor on, for example, the first one or two assignments.
- 5) Writing tutors and mentors should set limits on when they will meet with students, and make those limits clear to the students (no 4 a.m. calls, no papers an hour before they are due).
- 6) Writing tutors and mentors are more like gardeners than like plumbers: it is their job to grow writers rather than to fix papers. The pen, pencil or keyboard should usually be in the hands of the writer, not of the tutor. The tutor's and mentor's most useful tool is the ability to ask probing questions.
- 7) Tutors and mentors should not grade writing, nor should they comment on the instructor's grades in conferences with students. Tutors and mentors are coaching rather than evaluating; they should always encourage students to take their questions or complaints about grades directly to the instructor.
- 8) All writing tutors and mentors are required to attend scheduled training sessions during the semester they are working. Failure to attend training will cause the tutor/mentor to be dropped from the program. Training sessions are NOT counted as part of the 60 hours maximum paid tutoring class time. If you are a trained tutor or mentor pay close attention to which sessions you must attend.

What about grammar? The 3x PIC Rule: Point-Identify-Correct

Although we do not copy edit papers, we do not ignore grammatical, mechanical, and style problems in students' papers. Instead, we draw a student's attention to the error: **POINT**, ask if the student can recognize and **IDENTIFY** the error, and finally, ask if the student can **CORRECT** the error.

When you see a problem, ask if the student can identify the problem. If yes, ask the student to explain the problem, and then ask if the student can correct the problem. If the student cannot identify the problem, you should do that. If the student cannot correct the problem, you should help the student correct the problem.

Repeat this process three times. Each time, encourage the student to point out, identify, and then correct the error or problem. After that, encourage the student to complete corrections of the error during the revision process. If a student still has difficulty identifying and correcting the error, refer the student to one of the faculty writing tutors.

Remember the 3x PIC rule: Point–Identify–Correct–x3

PWT/FYM go/links

go/ctrl	Center for Teaching, Learning & Research
go/pwt	Find pay information, forms, and training schedule
go/writingcenter	Meet faculty writing tutors, tips for writing, hours for drop-ins
go/pwtblog	WordPress site for writing tutors and mentors
go/middwrite	WordPress site with writing tips
go/ctrlwritingcent	WordPress site for Writing Center
go/writingtweets	Tweets from the Writing Center
go pwtguide	LIS guide for tutors and mentors
go/guides	LIS guide for research

Off campus: www.go.middlebury.edu/ctrl

THE HALF-HOUR TUTOR SESSION

PWTs and FYSMs working in classes generally spend about 30 minutes with each tutee, but some tutees will require more time. If you are working with a class, discuss the time you need to spend with individual students with your faculty member. Drop-in tutors should limit sessions to 30 minutes when other students are waiting to see the tutor. If no other students are waiting, tutors can work with students as long as needed in a given shift.

- *Get Acquainted.*

- **What's the paper assignment?**
 - Have the writer show it to you.
 - What's the writer supposed to do?
 - What's the writer trying to do?
 - What is the writer actually doing?

- **Have the writer read the paper out loud.**

If the tutee is reluctant to do this, you can read the paper aloud yourself, or alternate reading aloud with the tutee. For very long papers, choose sections to read aloud, for example, the beginning and ending and any trouble spots.⁵⁵

- **Discuss the issues in the paper.**
 - Address the writer's concerns.
 - Take your cue from the writer.

- **Closure: What can the writer do from here?**
 - Goal is to leave the writer excited, not overwhelmed, about revising.

Always leave the writer someplace to stand.