

## The Role of Writing

Writing plays a very important role in your courses. At Montgomery College, we take writing very seriously. Your professors in most subject areas will assign essays, reports, presentations and other forms of writing, all of which will require that you demonstrate a certain level of competence.

Each subject area has its own mandates and requirements for student writing, but most agree on certain basics, such as:

1. The **content** of your writing, or *what it says*, must be satisfactory in that it addresses the specific assignment. More than this, the content of your writing must show that you have understood the assigned material and that you speak from that familiarity and knowledge. Your ideas must be interesting where appropriate, and your knowledge always accurate.
2. Your **organization and format** must be appropriate to the assignment. In the case of essays, paragraphs have to be centered on one key idea, and the writing must flow well.
3. The **language** must be clear. Grammatical errors must be kept to a minimum, and writing must demonstrate good sentence control. This area also generally includes proper word choice, accurate punctuation, correct verb tenses, etc.
4. The **style** of your writing must also be appropriate to the writing task. If you are writing a formal academic essay to be graded by your professor, a certain level of formality and care with your language is expected.
5. In cases where your writing includes research, you must **avoid plagiarism** by documenting your sources correctly, using the appropriate documentation style (MLA, APA, etc).

The writing you will be assigned in your courses will not always be formal, graded writing. Sometimes you will be asked to keep a journal, to brainstorm to generate ideas, and to see a piece of writing through several drafts. Writing is a process that takes time, and it is generally the case that you will work on your papers over a stretch of time that allows you to revise and polish what your work. Very often, you will also be asked to share your writing with a peer for critical feedback, and you will be asked to serve as a reader of a peer's writing as well. Both tasks help make you a more competent, proficient writer of your own work.

Good writing is not easy and it is never done quickly. Allow yourself enough time to review your work several times before you submit it to your instructor. This is the normal process of creating good writing, whether one is a published author or a beginning student writer. The College provides much support toward your success as a writer, such as tutoring and grammar software at the Writing and Reading Centers on every campus, plagiarism workshops through the College Libraries, and others.

Think of writing as one of the most essential skills you gain in college, one that will continue to serve you well, whether you go on to further your studies or enter a profession.

I wish you great success in your endeavors.

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