

Joseph Franklin

Creating cohesive writers at the University of
Southampton Writing Centre

Background about the Centre

Our goals

- Each student shares their opinions first and often.
- Each student does some writing in the session.
- Each student learns more things they can **DO** to improve future texts.

Our theoretical approach

Following insights from *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*

Process Pedagogy (not Product)

Student-centred (they guide the session, talk first)

Writing to Learn (i.e. learning by doing)

Or what might be called...

Practical/functional Writing--focusing on building better practices.

Our role

Putting skills and concepts to work on the page.

What happens?

A story of a tutorial.

Discussion

Tell me about the text.

Where are you in the process?

What's working, what's not?

What would you like to focus on?

Assess the text

Word level, sentence level, paragraph level, essay level is often useful to students.

Engage with the text.

Read aloud--ready to graffiti (word, sentence, paragraph level)

Reverse outline (paragraph level)

Underline topic sentences and transition sentences (sentence, paragraph level)

Rewrite research question, thesis statement, and essay map (sentence level)

Circle the main subject of problematic sentence, maybe move? (sentence level)

Paste into HemingwayApp or EditMinion for visualisation (word, sentence level)

writingatsouthampton.wordpress.com

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON WRITING CENTRE

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Fun! Fun! Fun!

FEBRUARY 24, 2017 3:21 PM

What a great week at work!

As I reflect on my week of tutorials in the Writing Centre at Southampton Uni, I think about all the writers who came in and how we discussed their work, discussed writing, and for most, had some 'breakthroughs'. There were those 'high grades' who were just looking to get even higher grades out

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FUN! FUN! FUN!

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[Writing Layers](#) – word level, sentence level, paragraph level, essay level.

[The Writing Process](#) – tailor your writing process to work the best for you.

[Writing Critically](#)– become a master of analysis.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

[Reading as a Writer](#) – top tips on reading to improve your writing.

[Resource Assessment Table](#) – be more thoughtful with what you read.

[Notemaking](#) – get better at it.

[Annotated Bibliographies](#) – the most useful research skill you aren't doing yet.

[Referencing](#) – gotta do it.

[Freewriting](#) – let the words pour out. See if it helps.

[Outlining](#) – make some plans.

[Refining the Thesis](#) – will help you focus your text so you don't waste time later.

[Reverse Outlines](#) – will allow you to make structural choices from a draft.

[Proofreading](#) – don't rush this part.

ASSIGNMENT TYPES

[Academic Essay Guide](#) – overview on structure, style.

A **reverse outline** is a way to make sense of the structure of your essay draft by summarising paragraphs into phrases. Sometimes we make an outline and then by the time we finish our first draft, we haven't stayed with our intended structure. Even in later drafts of our work, we can lose the thread of our thoughts. We are too close to the text, in this case, missing the forest for the trees. One way to get an understanding of how the ideas are progressing and where to make structural changes is to do a reverse outline. It will help to see the development of ideas from a more distant view.

How to do it

Either in print or on the screen, read through each paragraph and in the left margin summarise the main point in a single word or phrase. Let's say you are writing a paper on Shakespeare, your first paragraph might be summarised as *introduction*, the next might be *author background*, then *text background*, then *Ophelia overview*, etc. This process essentially reverse engineers an outline from where you are at that point in the writing.

Troubleshooting

If you are unable to summarise the paragraph in a clear statement, then it could be one of two reasons:

Let's talk about process.

How did we get here?

Invention

The importance of low-stakes writing.

Low-stakes writing: it's ok to make mistakes.

Freewrite

List

Mind map

Outline

Comic strip

Dialog

Whatever...

Most common tip:

Annotated bibliography is your bestest friend.

Annotated Bibliography-->

able to connect and compare the arguments in each article. That is the essential skill required for an effective Literature Review section on longer essays--like dissertations. Make each entry as long or as short as you will need. Transcribing the best quotes from your sources will also make it easier to insert them into your final essay.

Example

Lamott, A. (2005). Shitty First Drafts. In: P. Eschholz, A. Rosa and V. Clark, ed., *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*, 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, pp.93-96.

In this article, Lamott offers a confessional description of her writing process. When she writes, it is a really chaotic and frustrating event, but one that she accepts. The purpose of the article seems to be for young writers to relax a bit in the early stages of writing. If they feel too much pressure to be perfect, then they may panic and not get to those later stages with much energy or attention left. ← **SUMMARY | ANALYSIS** → Her article addresses the reader in a really engaging way, and she writes with a clarity of purpose that seems to fit with the younger students she is addressing. Lamott argues that, "Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere." While I think this is important for students to read for its sense of relief, isn't it also possible to have a specific place to start? The limitation of this text is probably that it should immediately be followed by some options for how to start in the best way for each student. **PLANNING** → In my essay on the writing process, I would use this in the section on the importance of writers to reflect on their own processes as a starting point to improving. I specifically like the quote above for discussing the need for some students to relax a bit in the early stages.

Work better, write better

Effective writing is not the product of a brilliant mind.

It is the product of an efficient, thoughtful worker.

How does this help us understand
coherence and cohesion?

Questions?

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