

WRITING CENTER INFORMATION SHEET

114 Library (Learning Resource Center) - first floor
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www.kent.edu/stark/writing-center

WRITING CENTER MISSION STATEMENT:

The function of the Kent State University at Stark Writing Center is to provide a free collaborative space in which all members of the Kent State Stark community (students, faculty, staff, and alumni) can find support for their efforts to become more effective writers. Utilizing one-to-one conferences—available both in person and online—our staff of highly trained undergraduate tutors seeks to promote thoughtful engagement and ongoing reflection throughout the entire writing process. Our goal is not to supply directions, give answers, or “fix” papers for clients, but rather to empower them to discover their own solutions to the challenges in their writing. In addition to helping clients brainstorm, problem-solve, and revise, we also offer them a wide range of print and online resources (pamphlets, manuals, handbooks, etc.) in further support of their efforts. Beyond their one-to-one work with clients, Writing Center tutors also conduct writing workshops in classrooms, help foster the recognition and celebration of student academic writing by annually publishing *The Writing Center Review*. Tutors also pursue their own research interests in the tutoring of writing, research which they frequently present at local, regional, and national academic conferences, and occasionally publish in scholarly venues.

WRITING CENTER PARAGRAPH FOR SYLLABI:

The Writing Center is a free service to help students become stronger writers. It is a place for students to talk with outside readers about their work, both early on when they are still generating and considering ideas, as well as later during the drafting and revising stages. The Writing Center’s staff of peer tutors is specially trained to help students identify their writing needs and to offer insight, feedback, and support. We also offer a wide range of informational writing pamphlets, both online and in print. The Writing Center is located on the first floor of the Library and is open for both walk-ins and appointments. Call us at 330-244-3299.

WRITING CENTER POLICY ON PROOFREADING:

While students often ask tutors to proofread (or “correct”) their papers, it is Writing Center policy that tutors can not proofread work for students. To do so would 1) ensure that students remain perpetually dependent upon others to proofread their work for them, rather than learning to do it themselves, and 2) would be unethical, essentially encouraging students to engage in plagiarism, i.e. passing off someone else’s work as their own. Instead, Writing Center tutors help students learn to catch their own errors by utilizing a method called Error Analysis (see back of handout for details). Students should understand that proofreading is a skill that requires both time and effort to learn, and that it cannot be successfully completed in a single, last-minute Writing Center visit, especially when larger issues are paramount.

ERROR ANALYSIS

When dealing with “late-order” concerns of grammar and mechanics, tutors utilize a teaching method called “Error Analysis.” Error Analysis offers a way of methodically testing a student’s awareness of, and ability to self-correct, his/her own errors. The role of the tutor is to act as a guide, not a proofreader. Tutors try to supply just enough support and information so that the student can learn to spot and correct errors on his/her own.

Usually the process goes something like this:

1. The tutor sits beside the student and looks on while he/she reads through the paper.
2. When the tutor notices an error that the student doesn’t detect, the tutor stops him or her at the end of the sentence.
3. The tutor says, “Would you reread that last sentence for me?” Then the tutor waits to see if the writer spots the problem.
4. If not, the tutor asks, “Do you see a problem with the sentence?” And again the tutor waits to see if the student can find and correct it.
5. If not, the tutor supplies an appropriate prompt: i.e., “The problem is with the verb.” Once again the tutor waits to see if the student can then self-correct.
6. If not, the tutor asks a leading question: i.e., “Why did you put that ending on the verb?” Many students will then be able to spot and correct the problem.
7. If not, the tutor then supplies the relevant grammatical or mechanical rule. At this point the tutor might give the student a copy of the relevant Writing Center pamphlet, or get a manual or handbook off the bookshelf, and go over the rule with the student. The tutor then lets the student correct the error himself/herself.
8. As the tutor continues listening to the paper, he/she looks for similar errors elsewhere. If it surfaces again, the tutor says something like, “Now look at this sentence. Do you see the same problem here that you had in that last paragraph?” Hopefully the student will be able to identify the problem, remember the rule, and self-correct.

At each step in Error Analysis, the point is to give students the opportunity to articulate their own understanding of the error and to find their own way to correct it. Only when it’s clear that the student can’t see the problem, or has mislearned or misapplied rules, should the tutor try to explain the issue directly and/or offer options for correcting it. Research indicates that Error Analysis is the most effective way of helping students resolve error issues in their writing. However, it is labor- and time-intensive. For students with multiple error issues, it is doubly important that tutors prioritize and focus on only a few major errors per session so as not to overwhelm the client. Such students will be encouraged to return for additional work on both current and future papers.

NOTE: Because Error Analysis relies to a great extent on a student’s residual and “felt sense” knowledge of language rules, it may be less effective with developmental writers and ESL writers for whom such knowledge is spotty or even non-existent. Such writers will likely need more extensive language instruction than Writing Center tutors can offer and should be referred to Lisa Hart in the Academic Success Center for ongoing developmental tutoring.