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BLOCK BUSTERS: Ten Tricks to "Jump-Start" Your Imagination

Amateur writers have a Ph.D. in procrastination. They delay starting every assignment until the last possible moment. The quality of their writing (and their attitude toward writing) suffers as a direct result: they become irritable, angry, frustrated, stressed out. Remember Lankford's Law: "There are no boring writing topics, only boring writers." Bust your writer's block. Jump-start your imagination. Creative thinking adds motivation, inspiration, flavor, fun, and flair to any assignment, any time, anywhere.

1. Mind Map
   Circle an idea or word in the center of a page; branch out from there in all directions.
2. Freewrite
   Write without stopping your spontaneous thoughts on this topic.
3. Rainbow Connections
   Brainstorm concepts, questions, and conclusions. Then used colored pens to sort and link them.
4. Reporters Questions
   Pretend you're the world's greatest reporter: ask who, what, where, when, why, and how.
5. Time Trials
   Give yourself half an hour to write the whole first draft (like an in-class test).
6. Picture This
   Make an outline or flowchart of evidence, arranged as paragraphs, step-by-step.
7. Kick Start with Key Quotes
   Write down the single most important, astonishing, or confusing quote from your research or reading. Explore its meaning from every possible angle. Then explain it to your readers!
8. Play Solitaire
   Put key ideas, quotes, evidence, and ideas on separate 3" x 5" note cards. Shuffle and arrange them into "suites" as if you were playing the card game "Solitaire"!
9. Mimic Excellent Authors
   Study examples of successful essays similar to your assignment. Do it like they do!
10. Discuss, Debate, Dialogue
    Think through your ideas, reactions, questions, confusions and inspirations with a tutor, a study buddy, a family member, or a friend. Bounce ideas off each other!
CREATING CREATIVITY: The Top Ten Ways to Add "Spice" to Your Writing

A good cook adds a subtle combination of spices to bring out the flavor in foods. The same is true in writing -- except that in writing the "spice" is food for thought. To provide that extra pinch of creativity to any essay you might add:

1. Six-Senses Descriptions
   What do you see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and feel?

2. Time-Travel Flashbacks
   Jump back in time to the most dramatic, most memorable moment.

3. Slow Motion/ Zoom In
   Slow down time to a crawl. Describe one minute, one second, one moment in delicious detail, like a slow-motion movie. Tiny, telling details create unforgettable images.

4. Comparisons/Contrast
   What is your subject "like"? What is your subject unlike? Like sweet and sour in cooking (or in love), opposites attract--and explode with fresh flavor and energy.

5. Show Don't Tell
   Instead of writing "I was angry" or "She felt sad," think what actions or words or gestures could you use to show - literally to "act out" - the essence of an emotion or idea. How can you "show" the reader what you mean without "telling" them directly?

6. Humor
   Even serious situations have hidden humor. Just be sure to laugh with people, not at them. Used wisely, humor is the most efficient way to use (not lose) an audience.

7. Quotes, Dialogue, and Slang
   Use famous quotes, dialog, slang, foreign phrases, and technical terms to add creative zest to your descriptions.

8. Suspense
   Tease, taunt, and tantalize your reader with hints and cliffhangers. Let every page leave them begging for more.

9. Point of View
   Nothing to say? Change perspectives: use You, He, She, We, or They instead of I.

10. Imagine That
    Ask your reader to imagine a perfect world in which the issues you describe no longer exist—or a nightmare world where those same problems have expanded!
RAVENOUS READING: Ten Tricks to Rev-Up Your Reading:

Great writers must also be great readers—especially in college, where so many writing assignments require detailed analysis of difficult readings. Here are ten ways experienced reader/writers use to improve their comprehension, speed, and pleasure:

1. Skim
   Preview titles, subtitles, and table of contents. Identify the author and date of publication. Then read the first sentence of each paragraph or section. What can you predict about the reading ahead of time?

2. Question
   Make a list of key questions you would like the author to answer based on your preview.

3. Find the Main Idea
   Don’t get stuck on tiny details before you don’t the overall argument. Focus on the big picture first.

4. Underline Key Quotes
   Underline, highlight, or copy out quotes which strike you as important. Try using several colors!

5. Circle Key Words
   Identify key words and concepts. Look up vocabulary you don’t understand.

6. Write in the Margins
   If you own the book, write questions, comments, and responses in the margins. Talk back to the author!

7. Section
   Identify the main sections or “chunks” in the author’s presentation. How is the essay organized? What are the main steps or stages? Make a rough outline or draw lines to show each section.

8. Chew It Over
   After reading, respond, review, and reconsider. To get started, try answering your preview questions—and then add a few new ones to ponder. If your textbook has study questions, try answering them too!

9. Read It Twice (or Thrice!)
   College-level reading is tough and time-consuming. Reading it once is never enough. Read it again!

10. Discuss and Debate
    Talk with others about what you’ve read. Conversation improves comprehension, memory, and attention.
THOUGHTFUL THESIS:

College writing demands that you learn to think for yourself. A thesis statement tells a reader what you think, why you think it, and how you plan to prove it. Fitting all that into a few sentences at the beginning of an essay isn’t easy—especially if you’re not yet sure yourself what you want to say! Hence experienced writers often revise their thesis continuously to keep up with their own ideas as their essay grows and changes:

1. Become an Instant Expert
   Use the library, internet, and interviews to create your own independent perspective.

2. Argue with the Author
   Define, defend, explain, and explore your disagreement with the author in detail.
   Think for yourself!

3. Invent a Creative Comparison
   Describe the author’s ideas, but use your own unique comparisons to add emphasis and creativity.

4. Catch a Contradiction
   Catching contradictions, fallacies, and loopholes in an author’s argument is crucial to critical thinking. Point out the author’s errors or omissions to launch your own ideas.

5. Update the Argument
   Even if you whole-heartedly agree with an author’s ideas, try updating and expanding them in light of current events and recent developments.

6. Take Off on a Tangent
   Take off from a small fact, quote, or side-argument in the author’s argument to explore your own original ideas and inspirations.

7. Use Your Own Personal Perspective
   If it’s allowed by the assignment (and by the instructor), use your own personal experiences to test and illustrate the author’s ideas. How do the ideas impact you?

8. Analyze Style and Strategy
   Instead of analyzing an author’s ideas directly, analyze the strategy the author used to present them – the author’s “game plan” or approach or style.

9. Put It In Perspective
   How do the author’s ideas compare/contrast with those of other experts on this subject? Where do they fit in on a historical or social or political spectrum?

10. Focus on One Key Quote
    Pick one especially important, infuriating, or insightful quote. Use your thesis to explain and explore it. Use the quote as a “key” to open up your own insights.
TERRIFIC TITLES: The Top Tricks to Attract Attention

Because writing assignments in school are required (and professors are required to read them) student writers frequently overlook the need for a title altogether. But professional writers always spend time dreaming up great titles. A terrific title sells your idea, sets the tone for the entire paper, and grabs the reader’s attention. Try making a list of ten possible titles. Then pick the one that sizzles and sells and satisfies.

1. Question Title
   “Is College Obsolete?”

2. Quotation Title
   For Whom the Bell Tolls

3. Pun Title
   School Daze

4. Academic Colon Title
   “Getting Even: Love and Loss in the Novels of Jane Austen”

5. Keyword Title
   The Pearl

6. Thesis Title
   “Drunk Drivers Deserve the Death Penalty”

7. Contradiction-In-Terms Title
   A Bright and Shining Lie

8. Symbolic Title
   The Color Purple

9. Humorous Title
   Honey, I Shrunk the Kids

10. Poetic Title
    West with the Night
BRILLIANT BEGINNINGS: Ten Ways to Hook Your Reader on Line One

Students often start every essay with a spineless generalization so large it can't possibly be contradicted. Ironically, this strategy backfires every single time. Instead of grabbing a reader's attention, tickling their curiosity, and setting the tone for an engaging essay, the first page limps lazily along—strongly implying that you have nothing provocative, specific, intriguing or original to say (even if the rest of your essay turns out to be exciting). Why start out stumbling? As an alternative, try starting the first sentence of your essay with a:

1. Question
   - Is there a difference between male and female ideals of love?

2. Quote
   - "Tis better to have loved and lost/ Than never to have loved at all."

3. Humor
   - Love, like other social diseases, is often incurable.

4. Six-Senses Description
   - Love is the stinging sound of goodbye, the tender taste of hello.

5. Story
   - My first attack of puppy love came when I was six years old.

6. Thesis
   - Money can't buy love -- unless you know where to shop for it.

7. Fact
   - Romantic love as we now know it was an invention of the dark ages.

8. Contradiction
   - Love is the loneliest of all human emotions.

9. Comparison
   - Love is like liquid, merging with all others, impossible to hold forever in your hands.

10. Definition
    - Love: an overwhelming feeling of affection for something beyond your self.
TEMPTING TRANSITIONS: Lexical Lubricants to Help Your Ideas Flow Smoothly

Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, random facts are jumbled, frustrating, and fragmentary. Placing puzzle pieces in a pile proves nothing. For readers to get the Big Picture, each fact must be individually lined up with all the others and carefully connected, step by step. In academic writing, facts don’t speak for themselves. You do.

1. Refer Back to the Previous Paragraph
   Although, as we have seen, money is important in American life, love is also.

2. Refer Forward to the Next Idea
   "The pursuit of happiness," as we shall see, is no easy goal to achieve.

3. Use Transition Words
   Use conjunctions (because, although, hence, however, surprisingly) to tie key points together.

4. Repeat Key Terms and Ideas
   Emphasize and repeat key words to remind readers constantly of your main ideas.

5. Introduce Each Piece of Evidence In Order
   A-B-C, easy as 1-2-3. Exhibit A, Exhibit B. "First, I will show that..." "Second, we will see..."

6. Introduce Every Quote
   Identify who said what, when, where, and why. Ask yourself, "What does the reader need to know?"

7. Explain Every Quote
   After showing each piece of evidence, tell exactly how and why it helps prove your point. Explain!

8. Thesis Tie-Ins
   Give each paragraph its own mini-conclusion: What does each paragraph add to your argument?

9. Ask Questions
   Try starting some paragraphs with questions: "What can be done? Recent studies show..."

10. Acknowledge Counter-Arguments
    Some critics argue that _________ . However, ___________.
EXEMPLARY EVIDENCE: The Top Ten Ways to Prove Your Point

One notable difference between student writing and professional writing is what I call "RPM's" (References Per Minute). Where the average student uses three or four pieces of evidence per essay, the average professional writer uses at least three or four pieces of evidence per paragraph. Often you'll find three or four types of evidence in a single sentence! In short, the professional's "RPM's" are higher. To rev up the RPM's in your own writing, try using:

1. Quotations: Simon Says
   A recent editorial in the New York Times called gun control "decades overdue."

2. Statistics: Naming With Numbers
   More than 60% of U.S. citizens support a ban on automatic assault weapons.

   The earliest gun control laws in the United States date from the 18th century.

4. Anecdotes: Stories and Examples
   John fired his first rifle at summer camp; he has loved handling firearms ever since.

5. Definitions: Winning the Name Game
   Henry Adams once defined a teacher contemptuously as "An adult paid to lie to children."

6. Six-Senses Details: Tasty Tidbits
   The cold bite of steel, the subtle smell of gun oil and powder, the reassuring weight of the weapon in your hands--all these contribute to the addictive allure of gun ownership in America.

7. Personal Experience
   My father first taught me how to hold a rifle when I was ten.

8. Surveys
   Nine out of ten Foothill students don't know that campus police carry firearms.

9. Historical Background
   Automatic weapons first became popular during the Civil War.

10. Analysis: Break It Down
    Gun control legislation comprises several different aspects from outright bans to owner registration to mandatory background checks for all gun buyers.
WISE WORDCHOICE: The Difference Between the Lightning and the Lightning Bug

Mark Twain said the difference between the right word and almost the right word is "like the difference between the lightning and the lightning bug." English is inexhaustible: there is always another way to say anything. But how to choose? It all depends on your audience, your goals, and the format you are required to write in.

1. Use Vivid Verbs
   Don't say "I like chocolate." Try "crave," "adore," "prefer," "worship," "dream."

2. Always Add Adjectives
  Chocolate is "creamy, fattening, fabulous, dark, divine, delicious..."

3. Adverbs Alter Action
   I crave chocolate constantly...compulsively...lustfully...reluctantly...joyfully...

4. Avoid Clichés -- or Revise Them
   "Melts in your mouth" is a cliché. "Melts in your mind" is fresh, original, vivid.

5. Assess the Audience
   Who will read what you write? How can you impress/convince/entertain them?

6. Choose an Appropriate Tone
   Formal language sounds stilted at a ballgame. Slang sounds sloppy at a job interview.

7. Define Technical Terms
   Special words and phrases can be colorful, but be sure to explain them.

8. Diligently Describe Delicious Details
   Focus on six-senses descriptions: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, feeling.

9. Less Is More
   Long words may sound impressive, but short words often pack more power.
   Weeding out weak words will make sentences leaner, meaner, and more memorable.

10. Avoid Vague Generalizations
    Writing "The story was nice" means nothing. Specify what was "nice" and why.
OPTIMAL ORGANIZATION: Ten Ways to Craft a Winning Game Plan

Good coaches analyze the opposition carefully before choosing the best game plan. Good writers analyze their audience for exactly the same reasons. Like choosing plays from a playbook, the order of your ideas affects their impact. Different readers demand different approaches— even though your own opinions remain unchanged.

1. Classical Thesis: Facing a Skeptical Audience
   State your thesis immediately (in the first paragraph!); then present step-by-step evidence to defend it. Note: This is by far the most common, practical, and powerful approach for writing college essays!

2. Delayed Thesis: Facing a Hostile Audience
   Don't state your thesis until the end (in the final paragraph); first build trust, explore – and reject – alternatives.

3. Hidden Thesis: Facing an Angry Audience
   Don't state your thesis directly: instead, rely on implied logic and innuendo.

4. Motivational Thesis: Facing a Friendly Audience (Preaching to the Choir)
   Don't argue over what you and your audience already agree on. Instead, get the audience fired up. Challenge them to put those shared ideas and values into action!

5. Question Thesis: Asking Introductory Questions
   Pose a crucial question in your intro; then explore alternate answers step-by-step toward your conclusion – engaging your readers in the exploration.

6. Middle-of-the-Road Thesis: Arguing Against the Extremes
   First, examine (and reject) the positions of extremists on both sides. Then present a common-sense, common ground, compromise solution which combines the best features of both sides.

7. Think-Outside-the-Box Thesis: New Approaches to Old Problems
   Examine an old debate from a surprising new angle. Warning: this requires creativity and persuasion.

   Rather than using logic and evidence, simply tell a story which makes your position seem inevitable.

   Use comparison to illustrate your ideas. For example: Is licensing guns is "just like" licensing cars?

    Unlike the middle-of-the-road argument, which rejects extremes, this position argues that both sides are right simultaneously. Your job is to explain how this is possible.
EXTRAORDINARY ENDINGS: How to End With a Bang, Not a Whimper

Studies indicate that 90% of what most readers remember is found in the first and last paragraph of any article. Yet student writers frequently treat the final few sentences like an exhausted runner treats the last mile of a marathon: "Just get it over with." Unfortunately, a collapsing conclusion can ruin an otherwise excellent essay -- just as a strong conclusion can rescue a paper in danger of self-destructing. To craft the best possible endings for your essays, you should:

1. Restate Main Points
   As we have seen, imagination, evidence, and organization are all indispensable.

2. Come Full Circle: Refer Back to Your Opening Image or Title
   If amateur authors have a Ph.D. in procrastination, professionals earn a doctorate in deadlines.

3. Add a Key Quote
   Tom Robbins wrote that "Inspiration is for amateurs; professionals write every day."

4. Link Your Thesis to a Wider Range of Ideas
   Learning to write creatively can unlock the keys to creativity in other endeavors.

5. Take a Strong Personal Stand
   Writing has strengthened and deepened and challenged me as a human being.

6. Address the Reader Directly
   How are you going to put these principles to work in your own next essay?

7. Answer the Ultimate Question: "So What?"
   Ultimately, the Top Ten Tips are mere starting points, not prescriptions for perfection.

8. Recognize Multiple Audience Expectations
   No list of tips and techniques, from ten to ten thousand, will work for every situation.

9. Add Something Extra: A New Idea, Comparison, or Fascinating Fact
   An essay (like any work of art) is never truly finished -- only abandoned.

10. Leave 'Em Laughing (or Crying, or Thinking) But Not Yawning
    The last sentence should be the most memorable line of all—a ringing conclusion, not a dull thud.
RADICAL REVISIONS: The Top Ten Rough Draft Remedies

Professional photographers make multiple exposures; musicians practice; scientists experiment; athletes train; actors rehearse. Professional writers revise. Get used to it. Writing always means rewriting.

1. Ask Your Audience
   Let tutors, teachers, friends, family, or fellow students read your work before you turn it in.

2. Put It In A Nutshell:
   State your main point in a single sentence. If you can't, your readers can't either!

4. Read It Out Loud
   Reading your essay out loud allows you to hear the rough spots and revise them.

5. Challenge Your Own Word Choice
   As Mark Twain said, "The difference between the right word and almost the right word is like the difference between the lightning and the lightning bug." Did you choose the right word each time?

6. Test Your Transitions
   Should you add more transition words or phrases? Does each paragraph have a bridge at the beginning? A thesis tie-in at the end? How smoothly does your writing flow?

7. Check Sentence Length and Variety
   Are your sentences too long? Too short? Too tangled? Too plain? Too repetitive?

8. Check For Contradictions
   Do your conclusions collide? Is your logic logical? Are there missing links? Gaps? Hidden hurdles?

9. Cut, Weed, and Whittle
   Why use ten words when five will work fine? "Avoid wasting words" is always a wise writer's motto.

10. Try Transplanting
   Dull, disorganized writing can be deadly. Emergency "heart transplant" surgery may be the only solution. Here's how to do it: First, circle the heart of your rough draft (your very best sentence, your most original idea). Then "transplant" it to become a brand new thesis - throw out the rest and start over!
PERFECT PROOFREADING: Even the most brilliant essay can backfire if it's filled with errors and typos. Yet beginning writers rarely take sufficient time to proofread. Here are ten ways to polish your draft to perfection:

1. **Proofread On Paper, Not On Screen**
   Most people can’t proofread properly on a computer screen monitor. You can’t make notes in the margins easily either. Always print out a paper copy of your final draft before you turn it in.

2. **Let It Cool Off**
   The longer you work on a piece of writing, the harder it becomes to catch your own errors. Take a break; set it aside. Like cookies hot out of the oven, let your writing “cool off” for a while.

3. **Budget Your Time**
   Experienced writers plan for proofreading. Beginning writers don’t bother—or run out of time. They pay the price later with low grades and rejection letters. Proofread every time!

4. **Search for Something Different Each Time**
   Instead of proofreading once slowly, try proofreading rapidly several different times, checking for a different type of error. First spelling. Then grammar. Then punctuation. One at a time!

5. **Use Computer Spell-Check (Plus A Dictionary)**
   Computers can catch most misspellings, but when two words have similar sounds but different spellings (such as “hear” and “here”) a computer can’t help at all. A dictionary can!

6. **Don’t Use “Grammar-Check” Programs**
   Unlike spell-check programs (which are mostly reliable), computer grammar-check programs don’t work well at all. Students who use them often make more errors than those who don’t.

7. **Pinpoint Pattern Problems**
   Most writers make the same type of errors repeatedly. Know your weaknesses and guard against them. Catch your most frequent type of error and you often catch them all!

8. **Read It Out Loud**
   Proofreading silently lets your eyes read too rapidly. Reading out loud forces you to slow down.

9. **Ask Others (But Don’t Trust Them Entirely)**
   Asking others for feedback is fine, but make sure you learn to proofread your own essay independently.

10. **Use a Ruler**
    Follow your finger (or a pencil) across the page or use a ruler to read line by line.
ESL ESSENTIALS: Editing Tips, Extra Courses, and Resources for Multi-Lingual Writers

If English isn’t your first (or primary) language, here are ten ways to improve your grades (and your writing):

1. Know Your Weaknesses
   List your most frequent grammatical errors, then edit for each specific type of error, one at a time.

2. Use a Grammar Handbook
   The Quick Access section “Tips for Multilingual Students” has exercises and explanations for you to review. Use them to conduct a self-study review.

3. Sign up for the Language Arts Lab
   Our Foothill Language Arts Lab has self-paced, one-unit, drop-in courses for “ESL Improvement.” Try it!

4. Sign Up for the ESL Writing Center
   This one-unit lab course provides individual, one-on-one tutoring by professional ESL instructors.

5. Take Our ESL Support Course (ESL 176)
   ESL 176 at Foothill is designed to be taken at the same time as English 1A. Review grammar skills and editing strategies while working on your English 1A and 1B assignments!

6. Take Basic College Writing (English 110) or College Reading (English 100) Before Taking English 1A
   These courses cover the same skills as English 1A, but more slowly. Although they’re not required for ESL students, it’s strongly recommended before taking 1A. Why not try them?

7. Write Short Sentences
   American-style writing emphasizes short, direct, simple sentence patterns. Short sentences are easier to edit for errors. Avoid writing long, complex sentences using unfamiliar grammatical structures.

8. Sign Up for Pass the Torch, EOPS, or the STEP Tutorial Programs
   All three programs provide free tutoring and support for students who qualify for their services.

9. Take Fewer Courses
   ESL editing takes extra effort! Consider cutting back on other courses when you take English 1A or 1B.

10. Budget Your Time For Extra Editing Effort
    Plan ahead. Budget at least a full half-hour (or more) just for editing your essay before you turn it in.
LITERARY LAUNCHPADS: Ten Approaches to Writing about Poems, Plays, or Stories

Many English classes (including Foothill’s English 1B) ask you to write essays about poems, plays, short stories, or novels. If your instructor does not specify a particular approach, here are ten classic ways to get started. To craft a successful literature essay, avoid simply summarizing the story. Instead of telling what happened, focus on how and why it happened. Then pick just one of the features to focus on throughout your essay.

1. Focus on a Crucial Character
   Pick just one character. Show how he or she shapes the overall meaning of the work.

2. Focus on a Central Conflict
   Show how the poem or plot revolves around a central conflict—something out of place, painful, or missing.

3. Focus on a Key Word
   Try focusing your thesis on just one key word. Put it under a mental microscope. Show how the meaning and significance of the word changes the meaning of the poem, play, or story as it unfolds.

4. Focus on a Key Quote
   What, in your opinion, is the most important single sentence or paragraph in the author’s creation? What is it’s full meaning? Why? Use your essay to explain, analyze, and explore it in delicious detail.

5. Focus on a Historical Context
   Show how the author’s life or other historical events of the era shaped the meaning of the work itself.

6. Focus on a Critic or Critical Theory
   First do some quick research. What do critics say about this work? Analyze their perspectives.

7. Focus on the Title
   Often the title of a literary work contains a key to deeper understanding. Use it!

8. Focus on a Crucial Contradiction
   Human actions and emotions are complex and contradictory. Literature often links apparent opposites: love/hate, good/evil, comedy/tragedy. Show where one such paradox can be found. Explore its meaning. Play with paradoxes.

9. Focus on a Central Symbol
   Find a symbol or metaphor which helps illuminate the central theme of the work in question.

10. Focus on a Moral Message
    What is the author’s true purpose in writing? Focus on the core social, moral, or psychological message.
BUSINESS BASICS: Ten steps to better business letters, reports, and memos

Business writing tends to be shorter, simpler, and more direct than college essays. Most Top Ten Tips strategies work well for business writing too. But here are ten additional writing tips for writing on the job:

1. Write Short Sentences
   American Business English requires simple, direct sentence patterns. Don’t get fancy!

2. Use Plain Language
   Avoid technical jargon, flowery language, and informal expressions.

3. Keep It Short
   In business, time is money. A one page memo often gets more attention than a twenty-page report.

4. Keep It Simple
   McDonald’s founder followed the KISS principle: Keep It Simple, Stupid. It also works for writing.

5. Know Your Audience: Customers or Co-Workers?
   Writing for your customers requires a whole different approach than writing for employees or bosses.

6. Remember You Are Always a Company Representative
   College writing stresses individuality. Business writing speaks for the whole company, not just yourself.

7. Accuracy is Essential
   Good business writing is accurate, precise, specific, and reliable. Get the details right!

8. Spelling Counts
   Errors of spelling and grammar aren’t just embarrassing: they can kill a sale or ruin a proposal.

9. Always Ask For Feedback
   Show a final draft to trusted colleagues or co-workers before sending it out to clients or your boss.

10. Copy Successful Samples
    Most companies have their own distinct writing style. Seek out successful samples. Use the company style in your own writing. Don’t write like an Apple employee if you work for IBM.
TAKING IN-CLASS TESTS: Top Ten Tips for writing better timed essay tests

College classes often require you to write on demand, in-class, under pressure. Most top-ten-tips in this packet will help you succeed on timed tests. But here are ten additional suggestions for surviving (and thriving) the in-class essay obstacle course!

1. Arrive Rested, Relaxed, and Ready
   Get enough sleep. Eat a healthful meal before class. Arrive extra-early. You won’t perform well on any test if you’re too exhausted or frantic to concentrate.

2. Budget Your Time
   Figure out how long you can afford to spend on each task listed below.

3. Read the Question Carefully
   Circle key words; divide the question into tasks and sections. Understand what it is you’re being asked to do. Answer the whole question, not just part of it (or none).

4. Brainstorm and Outline (Quickly!) Before You Begin
   Use mind-mapping, reporter’s questions, or other block-busting techniques to generate ideas; make a quick list or flowchart to follow.

5. Answer the Whole Question on Page One
   Use the first sentence to answer the question completely. Don’t worry about a fancy introduction (that’s for take-home essays). Instead, start your essay with your thesis. Even if it’s a three-part question, answer all three parts right away.

6. Write Double-Spaced
   Writing double-spaced leaves more room for last-minute proofreading, and makes your handwriting easier to decipher.

7. Stay On Course
   Keep your outline next to you as you write. Or copy your thesis statement quickly at the top of each new page.

8. Skip the Fancy Stuff
   In-class essays are "survival writing." Don’t worry about crafting a creative introduction or ending. Answer the whole question (in nutshell form) on page one.

9. Show What You Know
   Even if you don’t know the whole answer, write down what you know you know.

10. Pause to Proofread
    Save a few precious minutes to weed out the worst spelling problems, punctuation errors, or grammar/word-choice confusions. You can even pencil in missing words, missing transitions, or missing ideas if you have time.
TOP TEN WAYS TO QUOTE: Ten choices for presenting textual evidence precisely

Professional writers (and advanced student writers) always present their textual evidence in a wide variety of formats designed to fit the situation precisely. By contrast, beginning writers often monotonously use the same format over and over and over again.

Sample quote (just for practice): "All's fair in love and war."

1. **Paraphrase** (different words, same meaning = no quotation marks)
   There are no rules of proper conduct when it comes to romance and combat.

2. **Phrase Quote** (use just one or several words = quotation marks only)
   "All's fair" in the world of romance and "war."

3. **Full Sentence Quote with he/she said before** (add commas and caps)
   She said, "All's fair in love and war."

4. **Full Sentence Quote with he/she said middle** (add commas and caps)
   "All's fair," she argues, "in love and war."

5. **Full Sentence Quote with he/she said at end** (add commas and caps)
   "All's fair in love and war," she wrote.

6. **Add or Change words in the middle of a quote** (use brackets)
   "All's fair [play] in love and war."

7. **Delete Words in the middle of a quote** (use ellipses)
   "All's fair in [...] war." (Alternative format: "All's fair in...war."

8. **Block or Set Off quote** (follow instructions in Quick Access on page 403)
   Indent lengthy quoted material five-to-ten spaces (don't use quotation marks).

9. **Quote inside a quote** (use "_____ '___' _______")
   Scott said in class, "Someone once said, 'All's fair in love and war.'"

10. **MLA author/page citation** "___________" (Author page).
    "All's fair in love and war" (Doe 23).
TOP TEN WAYS TO TYPE TITLES: Ten examples of proper title-typing formats

Professional writers follow specific rules for punctuating titles. Beginning writers make up their own rules, or try (unsuccessfully) to guess. Here are ten examples of titles typed in correct MLA format. Notice how it all depends on the size of the work in question!

To punctuate Long Works use Italic or Underlining (but not both at the same time):
1. Newspaper titles  San Jose Mercury News
2. Movie titles  Gladiator
3. Book titles  The Overspent American
4. Play titles  Death of a Salesman
5. Websites  NYT.com or Cars.com

To punctuate Short Works use "Quotation Marks" (never use italics or underlining):
7. Newspaper Articles  "Stock Prices Plunge Sharply"
8. Chapter titles  "When Spending Becomes You"
9. Poem titles  "The Road Less Taken"
10. Essay titles  "Once More to the Lake"

Note: To punctuate your own essay titles don’t use italics, underlining, or quotation marks!
TOP TEN TUTORS:
Advanced, experienced students know the value of finding expert feedback. Here are the top ten places on the Foothill campus for writing students to get tutoring, encouragement, suggestions, and support. See the student handbook *Beyond the Classroom*, for a full listing of student services.

1. **Writing Center (Room 6305)**
   One-on-one assistance with college writing assignments by professional tutors.

2. **ESL Writing Center (Room 6305)**
   One-on-one and small-group tutorials for students learning English as a Second Language. 1-unit lab.

3. **Student Tutorial Center (Main Library Room 3526)**
   One-on-one assistance with college assignments by student tutors. Free service, no enrollment required.

4. **Language Arts Lab (Room 6308)**
   Individualized mini-courses in grammar, spelling, punctuation, reading comprehension, and study skills. Free computer word-processing access available.

5. **Library Media Center and Open Computer Lab (Main Library Room 3612)**
   Free computer word-processing and internet access available. Huge collection of educational videos available in all fields.

6. **Extended Opportunity Program and Services (Main Library Room 3526)**
   Counseling, support services, and scholarships for students with limited financial resources.

7. **Pass-the-Torch and Puente Program (Building 5971)**
   Intensive student-to-student tutoring and academic support services in a comfortable multicultural environment.

8. **Volunteer Center (Campus Center Bldg 2300)**
   Earn college credit for volunteer work with hundreds of local non-profit agencies.

9. **"Writing the Transfer Essay" Course (Writing Center Room 6305)**
   See college schedule of classes under "English Dept" for enrollment details. 1-unit lab required.

10. **Library Mini-Courses (Main Library Building 3500)**
    See college schedule of classes under "Library" for enrollment information. 1-unit to 5-unit courses available.
EDITING CHECKLIST  Ten questions to ask about any essay before turning it in.

Need help to make your essay more effective? Turn back to Top Ten Tips for a complete set of suggestions, explanations, and examples!

1. _____TERRIFIC TITLES: Do you have an original, creative, catchy title to attract attention? Why not try some of the Top Ten Tips tricks to find a better one?

2. _____BRILLIANT BEGINNINGS: Does your first sentence or paragraph hook the reader’s attention? If not, why not try some Top Ten Tips tricks to grab attention?

3. _____THOUGHTFUL THESIS: Did you place a focused, original, argumentative thesis on page one? If not, why not try some of the Top Ten Tips tricks to fix your focus?

4. _____TEMPTING TRANSITIONS: Did you add transitions between sections, ideas, and evidence? Try some of Top Ten Tips tricks for a smoother flow!

5. _____EXEMPLARY EVIDENCE: Did you use several types of evidence to prove your point? If not, try some of the Top Ten Tips tricks to make your argument stronger.

6. _____CREATING CREATIVITY: Did you add creative comparisons, dialogue, anecdotes, or other creative touches? Why not use some Top Ten Tips suggestions?

7. _____WISE WORDCHOICE: Is your word-choice appropriate and effective for a college essay? If not, use Top Ten Tips tricks to hone your choices.

8. _____OPTIMAL ORGANIZATION: In what order did you present your evidence? Try some of the Top Ten Tips tricks to reshuffle!

9. _____EXTRAORDINARY ENDINGS: Does your final paragraph add extra energy? Have a collapsing conclusion? Use Top Ten Tips to find a happy ending!

10. _____PERFECT PROOFREADING: What steps did you use to proofread your essay? How much time did you spend? Why not try some of the Top Ten Tips tricks to earn a higher grade? If English is your second language, what extra steps did you take in editing? Use Top Ten Tips "ESL Essentials" to raise your score!
ESSAY COVER SHEET
Instructor: Scott Lankford

NAME________________________________________________

CLASS TITLE/TIME ______________________________________

ESSAY #________ ESSAY TITLE__________________________

THIS ESSAY IS (CHECK ONE):
ON TIME _____
LATE _________

Grading Scale: max 200 points possible  180-200 = A; 160-179 =B; 140-159 =C; 120-139 =D

All English 1A essays are evaluated according to these official Foothill English Department criteria
(see your handout packet for a more detailed description of these criteria):

ASSIGNMENT STRENGTHS: WEAKNESSES:

TITLE __________________________________________

INTRO _________________________________________

THESIS _________________________________________

ORGANIZATION __________________________________

TRANSITIONS __________________________________

EVIDENCE ______________________________________

ENDING ________________________________________

CREATIVITY ____________________________________

WORD CHOICE __________________________________

GRAMMAR ______________________________________

SPELLING ______________________________________

PUNCTUATION __________________________________

TOTAL POINTS = ________________________________

GRADE = __________________________
ESSAY SELF-EVALUATION (REQUIRED)

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-- Are you planning to rewrite this essay?
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-- Did you have any computer or printer problems?
Instructor: Scott Lankford

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Instructor: Scott Lankford

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REWRITES POLICY: Rewrites can be turned in anytime during the quarter to earn up to 20 extra-credit points per essay. The last day to turn in rewrites is the last day of the eleventh week of class (the Friday before finals). You can even rewrite the same essay more than once if you want. In other words, there is no limit on the number of rewrites you can submit each quarter—except the limits of your own time, energy, and ambition. However, the maximum available extra credit points available for each essay is still 20 points each. Therefore, even if you rewrite the same essay five times, you can still only get a total of 20 extra points for your efforts. Sorry, but the 20-points-maximum rule still applies even if you submit a completely new, completely different essay as your rewrite. 20 points max!

REWRITES CHECKLIST: Staple the following items on this checklist together in the same order they are presented here. Essays which don’t fit these criteria will not be accepted for credit, even on the final day of class. Don’t lose points because you failed to follow these directions. In the past, many students have earned zero points on a rewrite because they failed to follow all the steps outlined below.

_____1. A copy of this completed checklist as a cover page.
_____2. Full-page (min 350 words), formal self-evaluation explaining all the changes you made in your new rewrite, why you made these changes, and how you feel the essay has improved. This page can be typed or handwritten. It is graded; severe penalty points will be deducted if it’s too short or too sloppy. Write carefully.
   Use the checklist on the back of this cover sheet to help get started. If you prefer to type your self-evaluation, that’s fine, but you still need to make sure it fits these criteria.
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_____1. Did you write at least one full-page (min 350 words)?

_____2. Did you explain all the different types of changes you made in your new rewrite and why you made them? For example, "I completely revised the introduction so it doesn't seem to contradict my thesis"; or "I revised my verbs so that the subject and verb agreement errors have been completely eliminated."

_____3. Did you explain exactly how you feel the essay has improved? Does your rewrite really show enough effort and improvement to deserve extra points? For example, "I feel my new introduction is not only more logical, but also more creative. It does a better job of catching the reader's attention, and helps make my whole essay more convincing." Or "the improvements I have made in grammar means that a reader can now focus on my ideas instead of on my mistakes."

_____4. Did you explain how you can apply these lessons to future essays you will write, not only in this class but all through your college career? For example: "I now see how much difference a great introduction can make in terms of organizing and understanding my own ideas. In future, I'll spend extra time coming up with a truly creative introduction because I realize how much time it will save me later on." Or "In future, I will be careful to add an extra, separate step to my proofreading process, circling all the verbs and double-checking that I formed the subject-verb agreement correctly."

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REWRITES CHECKLIST: Staple the following items on this checklist together in the same order they are presented here. Essays which don’t fit these criteria will not be accepted for credit, even on the final day of class. Don’t lose points because you failed to follow these directions. In the past, many students have earned zero points on a rewrite because they failed to follow all the steps outlined below.

_____1. A copy of this completed checklist as a cover page.

_____2. Full-page (min 350 words), formal self-evaluation explaining all the changes you made in your new rewrite, why you made these changes, and how you feel the essay has improved. This page can be typed or handwritten. It is graded; severe penalty points will be deducted if it’s too short or too sloppy. Write carefully.

Use the checklist on the back of this cover sheet to help get started. If you prefer to type your self-evaluation, that’s fine, but you still need to make sure it fits these criteria.

_____3. Your rewritten essay, with all changes clearly marked in highlighter on the new copy.

_____4. Handwritten margin notes next to each highlighted change explaining what is different and why you changed it.

_____5. The original essay, including the original Essay Evaluation form with my original grade and my original comments.
REWRITE SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST

_____1. Did you write at least one full-page (min 350 words)?

_____2. Did you explain all the different types of changes you made in your new rewrite and why you made them? For example, "I completely revised the introduction so it doesn't seem to contradict my thesis"; or "I revised my verbs so that the subject and verb agreement errors have been completely eliminated."

_____3. Did you explain exactly how you feel the essay has improved? Does your rewrite really show enough effort and improvement to deserve extra points? For example, "I feel my new introduction is not only more logical, but also more creative. It does a better job of catching the reader's attention, and helps make my whole essay more convincing." Or "the improvements I have made in grammar means that a reader can now focus on my ideas instead of on my mistakes."

_____4. Did you explain how you can apply these lessons to future essays you will write, not only in this class but all through your college career? For example: "I now see how much difference a great introduction can make in terms of organizing and understanding my own ideas. In future, I'll spend extra time coming up with a truly creative introduction because I realize how much time it will save me later on." Or "In future, I will be careful to add an extra, separate step to my proofreading process, circling all the verbs and double-checking that I formed the subject-verb agreement correctly."

_____5. Did you mention how long you spent (in minutes/hours) working on this rewrite, and any extra help or advice you received from tutors in the writing center or elsewhere?
REWRITE COVER SHEET
Instructor: Scott Lankford

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_____5. Did you mention how long you spent (in minutes/hours) working on this rewrite, and any extra help or advice you received from tutors in the writing center or elsewhere?
An "A" paper demonstrates a high degree of competence though it may have a few minor errors:

- Effectively addresses all elements of the assignment
- Presents an arguable thesis worth debating which guides the organizational structure of the essay
- Shows creative attention to an engaging introduction, clear transitions, and a perceptive close
- Develops ideas logically and thoroughly
- Provides a sufficient number of clear and relevant details for the main ideas
- Offers comments and conclusions which intrigue the reader
- Demonstrates excellent facility in the use of language
- Exhibits careful editing for errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure

A "B" paper demonstrates above average competence in response to the writing task: may have minor errors

- Addresses all elements of the assignment in an acceptable manner
- Presents an arguable thesis worth debating which guides the organizational structure of the essay
- Provides an inviting opening, transitions mostly smooth and directive, and a thematically related close
- Generally organizes ideas well and develops them adequately
- Provides some clear, appropriate details for the main idea
- Offers some insightful information of interest to the reader
- Demonstrates some syntactic variety suited to the purpose and tone
- Displays facility in the use of language
- Exhibits some editing for errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure

A "C" paper demonstrates average competence in response to the writing task though it has a number of errors; most do not obscure the meaning of ideas

- Addresses most elements of the assignment in an acceptable manner
- Presents a clear thesis that attempts to suggest an organizational structure
- Has an opening section that captures little reader interest, weak transitions, and a perfunctory close
- Shows an organizational plan that contains irrelevant, repetitive information and underdeveloped ideas
- Provides relevant though at times incomplete detail
- Shows choppy sentences which are repetitive and predictable
- Demonstrates some facility with language but uses redundant and imprecise words/phrases
- Exhibits a number of errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure, and average editing skills

A "D" paper demonstrates a rudimentary response to the writing task and is seriously flawed

- Addresses some elements of the assignment; those attempted demonstrate partial understanding of the tasks
- Presents an unclear and/or inappropriately placed thesis
- Has either no opening or one tangentially related to the thesis, few transitions, and an inadequate close
- Shows an attempt to organize but the plan is neither effective nor clear; main ideas are undeveloped
- Provides detail, some of which is irrelevant or inadequately emphasized
- Uses awkward or ambiguous sentences, along with fragments
- Demonstrates limited facility with language, for example-inappropriate word choices
- Contains many errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure, some of which obscure meaning

An "F" paper demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in writing skills

- Addresses few if any elements of the assignment; those attempted demonstrate misreading of task
- Presents no recognizable thesis
- Shows no recognizable opening or close; transitions missing
- Shows no recognizable organizational structure; main ideas undeveloped or irrelevant to task
- Provides little if any relevant detail
- Uses garbled or incomplete sentences
- Demonstrates almost no facility in the use of language
- Exhibits no editing skills and is replete with errors

Spell Checker Poem
Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore you please two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My chequer told me sew.
PROOFREADING PROVERBS:

1. HOW DO YOU SPELL POTATO? (Be sure to proof read research papers or essay tests before handing them in, especially if you used to be a US vice-president.)

If GH can stand for P as in Hiccough
If OUGH stands for O as in Dough
If PHTH stands for T as in Phthisis
If EIGH stands for A as in Neighbor
If TTE stands for T as in Gazette
If EAU stands for O as in Plateau
Then the correct way to spell POTATO should be:
GHOUGHPHTHEIGHTTEEAU

2. THE PROCRASTINATOR'S CREED

1. I believe that if anything is worth doing, it would have been done already.
2. I shall never move quickly, except to avoid more work or find excuses.
3. I will never rush into a job without a lifetime of consideration.
4. I shall meet all of my deadlines directly in proportion to the amount of bodily injury I could expect to receive from missing them.
5. I firmly believe that tomorrow holds the possibility for new technologies, astounding discoveries, and a reprieve from my obligations.
6. I truly believe that all deadlines are unreasonable regardless of the amount of time given.
7. I shall never forget that the probability of a miracle, though infinitesimally small, is not exactly zero.
8. If at first I don’t succeed, there is always next year.
9. I shall always decide not to decide, unless of course I decide to change my mind.
10. I shall always begin, start, initiate, take the first step, and/or write the first word, when I get around to it.
11. I obey the law of inverse excuses which demands that the greater the task to be done, the more insignificant the work that must be done prior to beginning the greater task.
12. I know that the work cycle is not plan/start/finish, but is wait/plan/plan.
13. I will never put off until tomorrow, what I can forget about forever.

3. EXPERT ERRORS:

"The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C,' the idea must be feasible." --A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith's paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. (Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.)
"Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy." -- Drillers whom Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil in 1859.

"Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction." -- Pierre Pachet, Professor of Physiology at Toulouse, 1872

"The abdomen, the chest, and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon." -- Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria, 1873.

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." -- Western Union internal memo, 1876

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." -- Lord Kelvin, Royal Society, 1895.

"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?" -- H. M. Warner, Warner Brothers Films, 1927

"Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value." -- Marshall Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?" -- David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings to invest in the radio in the 1920s

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers." -- Thomas Watson, IBM, 1943

"I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper." -- Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in Gone with the Wind.

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out." -- Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home." -- Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977.

"So we went to Atari and said, 'Hey, we've got this amazing thing, even built with some of your parts, and what do you think about funding us? Or we'll give it to you. We just want to do it. Pay our salary, we'll come work for you.' And they said, 'No.' So then we went to Hewlett-Packard, and they said, 'Hey, we don't need you. You haven't got through college yet.'" -- Apple Computer Inc. founder Steve Jobs on attempts to get Atari and H-P interested in his and Steve Wozniak's personal computer.

"640K ought to be enough for anybody." -- Bill Gates, 1981.

BAD METAPHOR CONTEST WINNERS
These are all entries in the annual Washington Post Style Invitational Bad Metaphor contest, a feature that runs on Sundays and is usually won by the same pool of 12 people every time. Don’t let your essay become next year’s winner.

1. Her face was a perfect oval, like a circle that had its two sides gently compressed by a Thigh Master.
2. His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free.
3. He spoke with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it.
4. She grew on him like she was a colony of E. coli and he was room-temperature Canadian beef.
5. She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up.
6. Her vocabulary was as bad as, like, whatever.
7. He was as tall as a six-foot-three-inch tree.
8. The revelation that his marriage of 30 years had disintegrated because of his wife’s infidelity came as a rude shock, like a surcharge at a formerly surcharge-free ATM. 9. The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn’t.
10. McBride fell 12 stories, hitting the pavement like a Hefty bag filled with vegetable soup.
11. From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you’re on vacation in another city and Jeopardy comes on at 7:00 p.m. instead of 7:30. 12. Her hair glistened in the rain like a nose hair after a sneeze.
13. The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease.
14. Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left Cleveland at 6:36 p.m. traveling at 55 mph, the other from Topeka at 4:19 p.m. at a speed of 35 mph. 15. They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan’s teeth.
16. John and Melinda had never met. They were like two hummingbirds who had also never met.
17. He fell for her like his heart was a mob informant and she was the East River.
18. Even in his last years, Grandpappy had a mind like a steel trap, only one that had been left out so long, it had rusted shut. 19. Shots rang out, as shots are wont to do.
20. The plan was simple, like my brother-in-law Phil. But unlike Phil, this plan just might work.
21. The young fighter had a hungry look, the kind you get from not eating for awhile.
22. “Oh, Jason, take me!”, she panted, her breasts heaving like a college freshman on $1-a-beer night.
23. He was as lame as a duck. Not the metaphorical lame duck, either, but a real duck that was actually lame. Maybe from stepping on a land mine or something.

24. The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant.
25. It was an American tradition, like fathers chasing kids around with power tools.
26. He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a garbage truck backing up.
27. She was as easy as the TV Guide crossword.
28. Her eyes were like limpid pools, only they had forgotten to put in any pH cleanser.
29. She walked into my office like a centipede with 98 missing legs.
30. It hurt the way your tongue hurts after you accidentally staple it to the wall.
Catfish and Mandala TIMELINE

1946  Viet Minh (pro-independence forces) win control of North Vietnam from Japanese occupation.

1946-54  French war in Indochina. French forced to surrender control of northern provinces. North and South Vietnam divided.


1961  Thong and Anh are newly-weds. They elope, marry without permission. Struggle to survive. First child (a girl) dies in infancy. Thong is a teacher. Anh takes in laundry to make extra money.

1962  Chi (oldest surviving daughter) is born. American military presence in Vietnam expands rapidly.

1963  Thong is drafted into South Vietnamese army. Works as a translator due to college education, fluency in English and French.

1967  The author, Andrew (An) Pham is born. Thong is promoted to Assistant Director of Propaganda in his wife's home village area. He commands 2000 men. Anh buys a "tavern" catering to American troops. With two new incomes, the family soon becomes relatively wealthy.


1973  Thong brutally beats his eldest daughter, Chi, for talking with a local leper-boy. An feels responsible for telling on her. For protection, Chi is sent away to live at her grandmother's house in her mother's home village, Phan Thiet.

April 1975  Fall of Saigon and the end of the war. Name changed to "Ho Chi Minh City."

May 1975  Pham family flees south from Saigon, hoping to escape to Thailand. At a police checkpoint, they are captured and imprisoned by Communist troops. Women and children are released after a few weeks, but Thong remains in a death camp awaiting execution. Fortunately, no one knows he was a former Director of Propaganda, or he would be executed instantly.

Thong works as a slave-laborer clearing mine-fields near the death camp. Many workers die when mines explode. Others are executed by firing squad. His family watches from outside the prison camp, exhausting the last of their wealth in an attempt to bribe the guards to secure his release.

Dec 1975  Father escapes from death camp (thanks to bribes paid by his wife to the guards). First the guards pretend to execute him, but instead they secretly smuggle him out of the prison.

June 1975  Family returns to the village of Phan Thiet. They escape from Vietnam to Thailand by fishing boat. Drifting off-course, they are finally rescued by an Indonesian ship.

1976-77  Pham family spends 18 months in an Indonesian refugee camp.

Sept 1977  Pham family arrives in Shreveport, Louisiana. Father finds work as a janitor in an industrial plant.

Oct 1977  Youngest daughter, Kay, is born in Shreveport, Louisiana.

May 1978  Pham family moves to Locke Drive in San Jose.

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<td>Epilogue: Epilogue</td>
<td>(340)</td>
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</tbody>
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# CHAPTER TITLE OUTLINE FOR FAST FOOD NATION

**P. Introduction**
- What We Eat (3)

**I. The American Way (11)**
1. The Founding Fathers (13)
   - Speedee Service (18)
   - Burgerville USA (21)
   - Progress (25)
2. Your Trusted Friends (31)
   - Walt and Ray (34)
   - Better Living (38)
   - Kid Kustomers (42)
   - Perfect Synergy (47)
   - The Brand Essence (49)
   - McTeachers and Coke Dudes (51)
3. Behind the Counter (59)
   - Space Mountain (61)
   - Throughput (67)
   - Stroking (71)
   - Detecting Lies (75)
   - Protecting Youth (78)
   - Inside Jobs (83)
   - Making It Fun (87)
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   - Devotion to a New Faith (94)
   - Free Enterprise with Federal Loans (98)
   - The World Beyond Pueblo (102)

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   - The Mistake of Standing Alone (115)
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6. On The Range (133)
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   - The Breasts of Mr. McDonald (138)
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7. Cogs In The Great Machine (150)
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    - At the Circus (234)
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- Scientific Socialists (260)
- What To Do (262)
A: The Meaning of Mad Cow (271)
- Wrong Wrong Wrong (276)
- Decline and Fall (280)
- Dog Eat Dog (284)
FOOTHILL COLLEGE WRITING CENTER
Winter Quarter 2004
Hours effective January 12, 2004

Monday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Tuesday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Friday 8 a.m. -3 p.m.
Wednesday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Thursday 8 a.m. -5 p.m., 6:30-8:30

How To Make an Appointment: Twenty minute appointments may be made by dropping by the lab in Room 6305 or phoning 949-7290. Drop-in tutoring is available only if a tutor is available.

Who Can Use the Writing Center? Assistance is available for any Foothill student enrolled in English 150, 151, or 152. Students who are not enrolled in the writing lab may not make appointments and will receive help only if no enrolled students are waiting.

What Kind of Help is Available? Writing Center tutors work one-on-one with individual students. Students may make appointments for help only on English course assignments. Those wanting feedback on transfer essays, financial aid applications, or essays for non-English course work may be able to get that help on a drop-in basis.

Writing skills covered include:
- thesis statements
- outlines
- transitional passages
- overall organization
- sentence structure
- documentation
- punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, etc.

What Do Students Need to Bring? When students come for their appointments, tutors expect students to have done as much work on their assignments as possible. At the very least, students should know both the text and have some possible ideas for a paper. If students bring a rough draft, it should be legible and double-spaced. All students must bring a copy of their writing assignment instructions.

To Receive Credit for English 150, 151, or 152 students should visit the writing center at least five times during the quarter or meet alternative requirements as established by the Writing Center staff. Students may not schedule more than eight visits per quarter. To assure that everyone gets an appointment, students should try to spread their visits out according to the following schedule:

1st visit: between January 5 and January 30
2nd and 3rd visit: between February 2 and February 27
4th and 5th visits: between March 1 and March 22

To: Composition Students
From: Nancy Gill, Writing Center Coordinator

Everyone enrolled in English 110, 1A and 1B is encouraged to enroll in a one unit writing lab. To earn that unit come to the Writing Center at least five times during the quarter to discuss an essay or writing issues with one of the tutors.
The Writing Center staff is available to help you with many aspects of the writing process. Although we expect you to think about your assignment before coming for help, you do not have to have a completed rough draft. Many students benefit most when they come early in the writing process for help with brainstorming, thesis development, and outlining. If you do bring a rough draft, please make sure it is legible and **double-spaced**. Don't wait until the last minute. Leave yourself enough time so you can incorporate our suggestions in a final draft before the essay is due. **Please bring a copy of your assignment** and, if applicable, the text you are responding to. If you are coming to us for help on a rewrite, bring the original essay along so we can determine whether you have responded to your instructor's comments and suggestions.

To make best use of the Writing Center spread your visits out over the quarter, so that the individualized feedback you receive from us will complement what you are learning from your classroom instructor and help strengthen your writing skills. Unfortunately, many students don’t sign up for the writing lab because they worry they won’t have enough time in their schedule to come; however, students generally discover that the time they take to come to the Writing Center actually saves them time. Students constantly tell me that the twenty minutes they spend brainstorming or setting up outlines in the Writing Center saves them hours of spinning wheels at home. Furthermore, by pointing out to you early in the process that your thesis is too broad or narrow or that your essay has no thesis or supporting evidence, we can save you the frustration of spending hours on an essay that doesn't meet your instructor's expectations. We are here to comment on your writing, praise what we like, and suggest ways to improve your essay. We are **not** here to tell you what to write, predict what grade your instructor will give an essay, or do line-by-line editing. If you have specific problems with sentence structure or punctuation, we will be happy to review rules with you so you can better understand why you are making errors. If you have multiple levels of problems, we will refer you to the Academic Skills lab or suggest that you use an on-line writing program.

You can use the Writing Center by dropping in for help or by making an appointment ahead of time. Often drop-ins can get help immediately, but if you want to make sure that you don't have to wait or you want to get help from a specific tutor, we advise you make an appointment by stopping by and signing yourself up for the time slot you want or by phoning 650-949-7290. While you are welcome to come to the Writing Center more than five times, the maximum visits you may make is eight. If you need to cancel an appointment please do so at least two hours ahead of time so another student can fill that slot. Students who fail to show up for appointments or consistently cancel appointments at the last minute will be denied the opportunity to make more appointments.

Those of us who work at the Writing Center love our work because it allows us to give the kind of one-on-one help that is essential to improving most people's writing. Most of the students who come here, whether they struggle with basic skills or are gifted students writing at an advanced level, tell us that they benefit from the feedback they receive. In fact, many students who have transferred to four year universities have let us know they wish that their new campus provided a Writing Center like Foothill's--a place where experienced tutors and writers will praise them for good writing and suggest how they can make a piece of writing more effective. We hope that you will take advantage of this support service that Foothill offers you.

**STUDENTS' COMMENTS ON THE VALUE OF USING THE WRITING CENTER**

"When I started taking Honors English 1A last fall, I had difficulty with many of the writing assignments and therefore decided to visit the Writing Center. I truly appreciated the fact that by going to the Writing Center, I was able to work one on one with a tutor and specifically concentrate on the weakest points in my writing. I really
believe that the individual attention given to each student at the Writing Center is extremely helpful . . . When I took Honors English 1B last spring with Dr. Paye, I also returned regularly to the Writing Center. Frankly, I think that any student taking English 1A or 1B would be foolish to not take advantage of this resource." Maryse Frivold.

"I strongly advise that everyone take this one unit course because it pays off every time you get your work back from your teachers, and it will make your future courses a little easier. . . If embarrassment is holding you back then let me reassure you that there is nothing to be embarrassed about in getting valuable suggestions on how to improve your writing and get a better grade. You are helped by trained professional tutors who work with your teachers and know what your teachers expect . . . If you are here to get a good education, you should take this course." Rita Singh

"Working with the Writing Center staff helped me to narrow down my thesis and organize evidence to back it up . . . I was able to improve the transitional sentences in my essays so that they not only 'transitioned' well from one paragraph to the next, but so they also clearly introduced the paragraph in question . . ." Cara Finley

Going to the Writing Center "helped me organize my essays and find out what I really wanted to write." Ketty Tanizar

"I recommend to all students who want to improve the quality of their writing that they sign up for the Writing Center labs. The one-on-one help I received there gave me valuable insight into my writing strengths and problems." Malcolm Harvey

"As a re-entry student, I found the Writing Center to be a wonderful and painless resource. Of course, I was afraid at first to sit down with an instructor one-on-one and have her read my rough drafts with an eye and ear for clarity, precision, musicality, and form. But what I found was not someone who wanted to change my ideas, but to fine-tune and hone them. I not only received insightful instruction and advice, but I was also given the unexpected gift of encouragement and praise. There is no way I can overstate how beneficial this was for me--especially as a re-entry student. The instructors in the Writing Center helped me to think more objectively about my own work, to organize my thoughts more clearly, and ultimately made me a better writer. And if that wasn’t enough, they helped me get the grades. Use the Writing Center. Become a better writer.” David B. Ruderman

*Most of these students received Language Arts awards spring of 1998

An Open Letter to ESL and International Students from Dr. Scott Lankford

Students whose first (or only) language is not English often feel especially nervous when taking their first college-level English course. Some ESL or International students even worry that the instructor (me!) may be prejudiced or hostile towards them – and that this alleged “prejudice” will negatively impact their grades. A quick overview of my grading policies and writing assignments should help convince you that such fears are false (maybe even a bit silly). If anything, students who speak more than one language may have some special advantages in taking this particular class.

Let’s begin by examining the final grades I’ve submitted over the last three years of teaching English 1A (for a total of nine quarters for over 1000 students total).
Surprisingly, ESL writers and international students have received more than 50% of all A’s in my English 1A classes. This pattern repeats every year, year after year. The same pattern holds true for individual take-home essay assignments. Here again, ESL students have received a majority of the A’s (more than 50%) in most cases.

Here’s one reason why: all three major essays in this class are specifically designed to appeal to students whose first language is not English. For example, the first book assigned, the award-winning book Catfish and Mandala, is written by a former Foothill/De Anza student who did speak a word of English until the age of 10. Furthermore, the “turning point” essay assignment for this book requires students to use their own life experience (including life in other countries) to help write their essay.

Similarly, the second book I’ve assigned, Fast Food Nation, describes the global, worldwide expansion of the American fast food industry (one of the most universal international experiences on earth in the 21st century). And here again, international students are specifically encouraged and empowered to write about experiences in their home countries, or even to use research sources written in other languages.

Finally, in the last book I’ve assigned, Earth Odyssey, each chapter is specifically focused on Africa, South America, China, Thailand, and Russia – as well as familiar U.S. locations right here in California. So for all three essays assigned, students who are already familiar with life in other countries (or with other languages and cultures) may have a very real advantage.

Of course none of this means that the course is “easy” for anyone, regardless of where they grew up or how many languages they might speak. And I won’t pretend that ESL students may face special challenges when taking this course (especially in English grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary). For this reason, there’s a special section in my Top Ten Tips handout packet dedicated specifically to the needs of ESL students - - and a whole section in our required handbook, Quick Access, entitled “Tips for Multilingual Speakers.” If you need more advice or encouragement as you begin taking my English 1A class this week, these handouts and handbooks might be a great place to start!

Sincerely,

Dr. Scott Lankford
English Department, Foothill College

HOW TO USE THE LANGUAGE ARTS LAB

LOCATION: Room 6308
HOURS: M-TH 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
      Fri    8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

FREE FREE FREE! All English 1A and English 1B students are automatically signed up to use the Lab Services for free (the Writing Center is free to students also). However, if you want/need academic credit, you also have the option of signing up for any of the 1-unit courses below through the Language Arts Lab, the Volunteer Center, or the Library.
COMPUTER LAB: There are full service Mac and PC facilities available for researching, typing, and printing out your papers.

IMPROVING YOUR WRITING SKILLS: Have your teacher (me!) fill out the referral sheet on the flip side of this page to help identify the skills you wish to work on before you visit the lab for help the first time.

ENGLISH SKILLS COURSES (1 UNIT): Registration is available for the first eight weeks of each quarter.

ACAD 104: Spelling Improvement
ACAD 105: Writing Better Sentences
ACAD 110: Grammar Improvement
ACAD 112: Vocabulary Improvement
ACAD 122: Listening and Pronunciation Skills for ESL
ACAD 123: Word Processing and Keyboarding Skills

CAREER PLANNING (all offered online)

CRLP 71: Career Life Planning (1 unit)
CRLP_73: Resume Writing (1 unit)
CRLP 74: Successful Interviewing Techniques (1 unit)

STUDY/RESEARCH/LEARNING SKILLS
LIB 50: Intro to Library Skills (1 unit)
COIN 53: Intro to On-Line Learning (1 unit, online)

SERVICE LEARNING
SOSC 79 (See Steve Mitchell in the Volunteer Center)

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Language Arts Lab Referral

Student: _______________________
Instructor: ____________________

Course:
☒ English ☐ English ☐ English ☐ English ☐ English
100 110 1A 1B 1C
☒ ESL 137 ☒ ESL 147 ☐ ESL 157 ☐ ESL 167 ☐ ESL 25
ESL 26

Grammar:

- Verb Tense
  - Present
  - Past
  - Future
  - Perfect
  - Conditional
  - Verb Tense Consistency
- Articles
- Adjectives and Adverbs
- Nouns
- Plurals
- Pronoun Reference
- S/V Agreement
- Other:

Punctuation:

- All Punctuation
- End Marks
- Comma
- Semicolon, Colon
- Quotation Marks
- Hyphen, Dash
- Italics

Sentence Structure:

- Sentence Combining
- Simple
- Compound
- Complex
- Compound-Complex
- Comma Splices and Run-ons
- Fragments
- Other:

Vocabulary:

- General Vocabulary Development
- Phrasal Verbs
- Word Forms
Spelling

Sample Standard American College Essay Format
[Insert Xerox of pages 171-172 from Quick Access Handbook]

Sample Works Cited Page
[see pages 181-182 in the Quick Access Handbook or look online at easybib.com]