

WRITING IN POLT 403

1. The Basic Steps of Writing for POLT 403:

a. Before beginning to write, read the task carefully to see what is required. If you are not sure what is expected, Ask me in class about the task,

UNDERSTAND THE TASK.

b. Before beginning to write, think out your general answer and approach. Doing this will help you define your thesis and structure your essay.

UNDERSTAND YOUR RESPONSE TO THE TASK.

c. Support your general answer logically and effectively. Use specific details, examples, and textual references and avoid assertions, unexplained generalizations, and irrelevant information and discussion.

PERSUADE ME YOU UNDERSTAND THE TASK, YOUR RESPONSE TO THE TASK, AND WHAT YOU HAVE STUDIED.

d. The reader should know your general conclusion or position from having read your opening (thesis) paragraph. When you finish your essay, read it and ensure that the essay is in agreement with your opening paragraph.

ENSURE THE ESSAY FULFILLS THE TASK AND IS CONSISTENT.

e. Read your essay through after it is finished asking the questions – have I responded to the task, is my position clear, can someone follow my reasoning easily, have I supported my position well, and will the reader be persuaded that I understand the context of this task?

THINK ABOUT THE READER.

Recap:

◆ **UNDERSTAND THE TASK.**

◆ **UNDERSTAND YOUR RESPONSE TO THE TASK.**

◆ **PERSUADE ME THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE TASK, YOUR RESPONSE TO THE TASK, AND WHAT YOU HAVE STUDIED.**

◆ **ENSURE THE ESSAY FULFILLS THE TASK AND IS CONSISTENT.**

◆ **THINK ABOUT THE READER.**

2. Thesis or Statement of Intent:

a. Your first paragraph must show me that you understand the task and introduce me to your overall attitude to the subject or to your conclusions

b. If you are developing a dominant idea, such as a conclusion or a specific response to a task, state that idea clearly in your first paragraph. If you can, state the meat of your idea in a single sentence. If you are precise in your thesis, you will avoid writing “about” the task/question. If your thesis has a focus, you will more likely keep on the issue at hand and avoid wandering off. Equally important, the reader will know what your point is and can follow your reasoning better.

Example: “The 1990's will demand a redefinition of what constitutes national

security. In the 1970s the concept was expanded to include international economics as it became clear that the U.S. economy was no longer the independent force it had once been, but was powerfully affected by economic policies in dozens of countries. Global developments now suggest the need for another analogous, broadening definition of national security to include resource, environmental and demographic issues.”

c. If you have no dominant idea but have a purpose, such as explaining, summarizing, or describing, state what you intend to do briefly in the opening paragraph.

Example: *“This is the story of how, belatedly and reluctantly, the United States came to intervene and how that intervention brought the war in Bosnia to an end.”*

d. In both cases, clarify your thesis or intent in the opening paragraph. Do not let the reader get into your essay without a guide.

3. The body of your essay:

a. Here you support your thesis or intent. Everything must have a clear relationship to your thesis or intent.

b. How you go about doing this depends on the task at hand. That task may lead you to using examples linked to the thesis, drawing comparisons related to your topic, discussing a process, or developing the causal relationship.

c. In a course of study, it is always a good idea to draw on the readings and your class notes for ideas, concepts, evidence, definitions, and examples. Often the readings or the instructor will have provided you approaches for your response.

d. If you are presenting an argument, you should have a logical arrangement of premises and evidence leading to your conclusion, which should be apparent in your thesis. Usually you should also respond to the critical critiques of your view. Otherwise your reader, finding easy counters to your views, may quickly dismiss your efforts.

e. If you are presenting a critique, you must recognize your perspective and that of the critiqued source, aim your critique at errors in reasoning, omission, and fact. Then present your evidence effectively.

f. A good way to provide additional support or to expand what you have said, without burdening the text of your essay, is to use footnotes to refer the reader to information in your readings or other sources. However, remember – quotations rarely can stand alone. Usually, you must explain how a quotation fits into your essay or makes your point.

4. Paragraphs:

a. A good paragraph, in many cases, is a good short essay – complete, unified, coherent, and orderly.

b. There should be coherence between and an order to your paragraphs.

c. Every paragraph must have a topic sentence.

5. Take Care:

a. Correct spelling and other grammar errors. Such errors, if nothing else, show a lack of

interest in what you are doing.

- b. Be careful to use the word that carries your intent.
- c. Be consistent and correct in the use of theory, definitions, conceptual words.
- d. Passion may guide your writing, but what should show is your reasoning.
Write with your mind in control, not your passions.
- e. Causality is a complex concept. While it is important to identify and analyze key causal variables, be careful in attributing causality.
- f. Use footnotes or internal citations (McAuley, p. 47) to refer to where you got your ideas and information. For this course footnotes need be only name or text and a page number – McAuley, p. 47. Refer to the section on honesty in the syllabus.

6. Format and Structure:

- a. If typewritten, each essay single-spaced, using fonts 11-12, with standard 1 inch margins.
- b. If handwritten, they will be the equivalent in size of the above.
- c. The required length of the paper is the minimum requirement.

7. Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

Citing Sources. An aspect of being honest is ensuring that you give credit to your sources. Above I have told you what I expect when you deal with me and if you collaborate on a task. Additionally, for all tasks, you will provide a citation showing your sources, even if these are from the text or a reading on my website. For questions and paragraphs, one citation may be sufficient and can come at the end of your response to the task. For essays, I expect the citations to be at the appropriate points in the essay. Citations should be in the form: (Lundestad, p.254). There are penalties for not citing your sources, up to a full grade for the assignment, and if warranted I will follow the university's procedures for dealing with academic misconduct. **You might wish to look at this site to help you understand better plagiarism --** www.unh.edu/liberal-arts/plagiarism/plagiarismHome.cfm

8. Informational Footnotes

- a. Often it is useful to use informational footnotes. In these cases, the purpose of the footnote is not giving credit, but providing information necessary for the essay, but is not needed in the body of the work. The purpose can also be to keep the flow of the paper while providing useful or for some necessary information. An example: you mention NATO in the essay and would like to provide the reader some information on the alliance. Another example: your use an approach or a concept that is not accepted by all and you want to discuss briefly the opposing view, perhaps referring to a source.
- b. See 3f above.