



*Writing Initiatives*  
University of Alberta



*Centre for Writers*



International Undergraduate  
Academic Success Program

Academic Success Program  
International Undergraduate

Welcome



Susan Chaudoir, PhD(c)  
Faculty of Education &  
Scholarship of Teaching & Learning



Madeline Smith, Year 5  
Faculty of Arts &  
Centre for Writers

# Centre for Writers Web site



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Centre for Writers website. The browser's address bar shows the URL [www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/Resources/Resource.aspx](http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/Resources/Resource.aspx). The page features a large banner image of trees with the text "Centre for Writers" overlaid in green. Below the banner is a navigation menu on the left and a main content area on the right. The main content area displays the heading "Centre for Writers Resources:" followed by a list of resource categories, each preceded by a plus sign in a square icon.

Home

Book an Appointment

Contact Us

Workshops

Becoming a Tutor

Tutor Bios

Centre for Writers Guiding Principles

Policies

FAQ

Resources

Other Writing

Home > Resources

## Centre for Writers Resources:

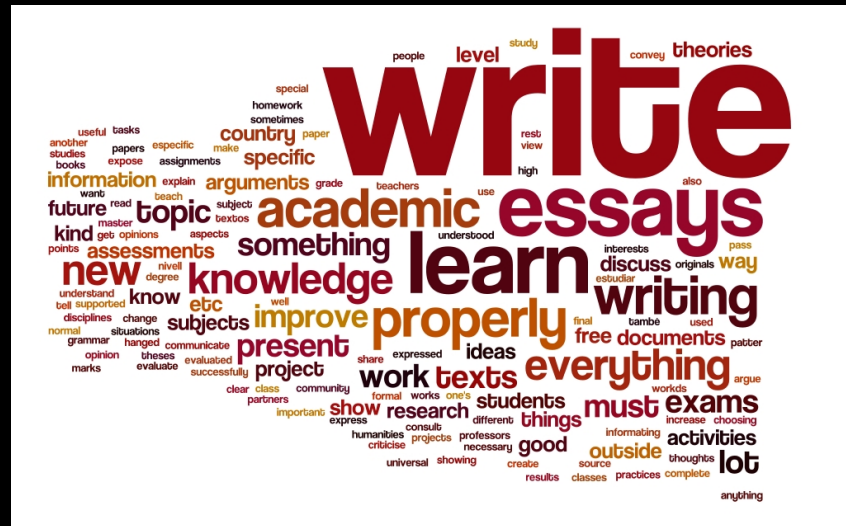
- + Plagiarism
- + Citation Styles and Reference Guides
- + C4W Workshop Handouts
- + ESL Reference Items
- + On-line Resources for English Pronunciation:
- + Writing Centres
- + General Writing Resources
- + Writing for Different Purposes
- + eBooks
- + Fun Sites

*Look for UofA+ 2013 here!*



# We will introduce you to:

- Academic writing
- Canadian or North American expectations of academic writing





# We will not be able to

- Make you a perfect writer
- Prepare you for every type of writing assignment
- Guarantee you good grades



# Presentation Topics – Day 1

1. Cultures of writing
2. Writing for the disciplines
3. Types of essays and assignments
4. Thoughts on the writing process

# Cultures of Writing

- Expectations of writing can vary
  - from culture to culture
    - Japanese culture: job of reader to understand
    - Canadian culture: job of writer to understand
  - from instructor to instructor
    - Science professors
    - English professors
    - Biology 101, different sections



# Cultures of Writing

- Expectations of writing can vary
  - from person to person
    - Susan's story of writing in Scotland
    - Madeline's story of writing in first year

What are your expectations of writing  
at the University of Alberta?

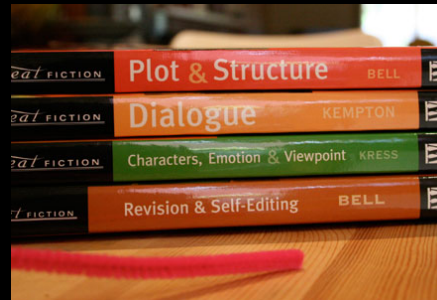
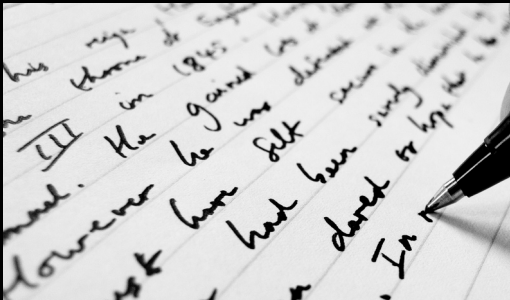
# Your Culture of Writing

Please share  
your culture of writing  
from your home country

# At the University of Alberta

Writer is responsible to meet reader's expectations

[Communicating in English \(YouTube Video 5:33\)](#)





# Academic Expectations of Students

It is up to you to ask questions

- Whom are you writing for?
- What have they told you to do?
- What do they expect to read?
- What do you want to tell them?



**WHO**

**WHAT**

**WHERE**

**WHEN**

**WHY**

**HOW**

# Our Advice to You

Common communication problems  
between instructors and students

- ① **Instructors** assume you understand everything you read
- ② **Students** assume instructors tell them everything they need to write the assignment successfully



# Our Advice to You

## START WRITING EARLY

September							October							November							December						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30						27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31				

FROM: <http://pgoh13.com>



START WRITING



ASSIGNMENT DUE

Take a  
**BREAK**



GET OUT OF YOUR CHAIR,  
IT'S **KILLING** YOU



# Academic Expectations

Rhetorical in nature  
**Purpose**  
**Audience**



# Purpose

## Direct and explicit

- What are you writing?
- If it is not clear, ask your instructor
- Are you writing a:
  - Description of a lab experiment
  - Exposition of a love story
  - Argument for global economic trade
  - Reflection on your field experience
  - Review of literature on genetically modified corn

# Audience

## Direct and explicit

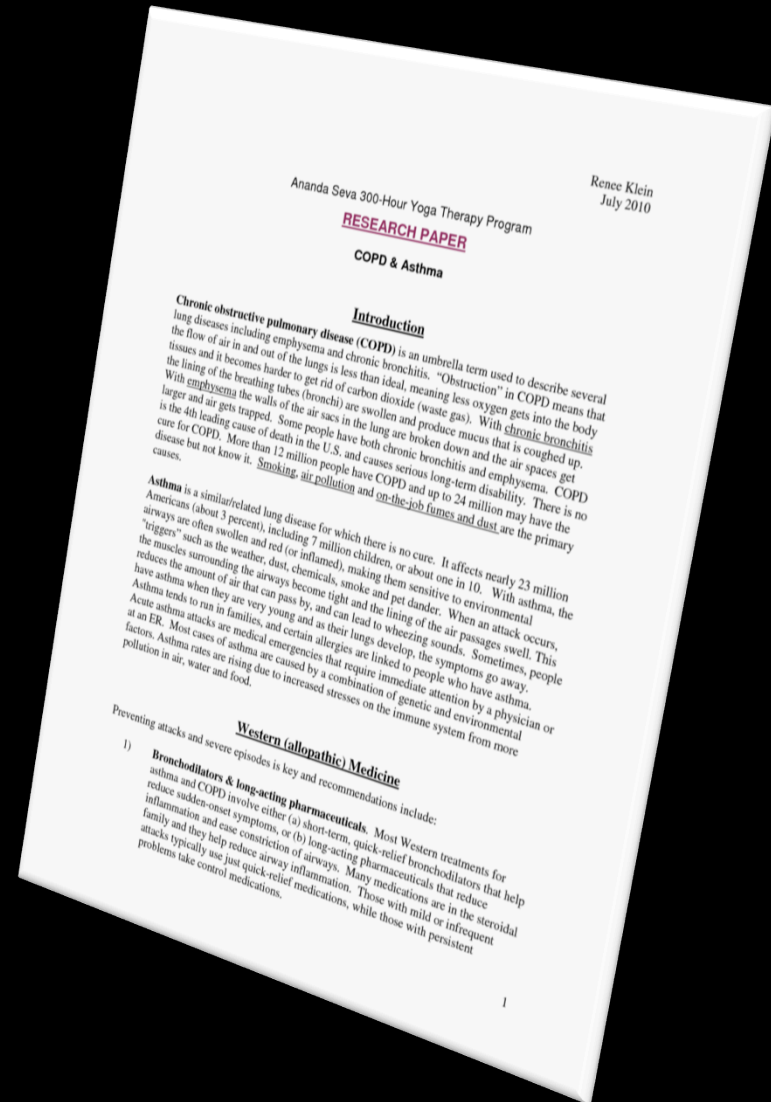
- Who are you writing for?
- Your instructor or marker
- Guide your reader
- For example,
  - Use headings
  - Use bold text



# Audience

## Direct and explicit

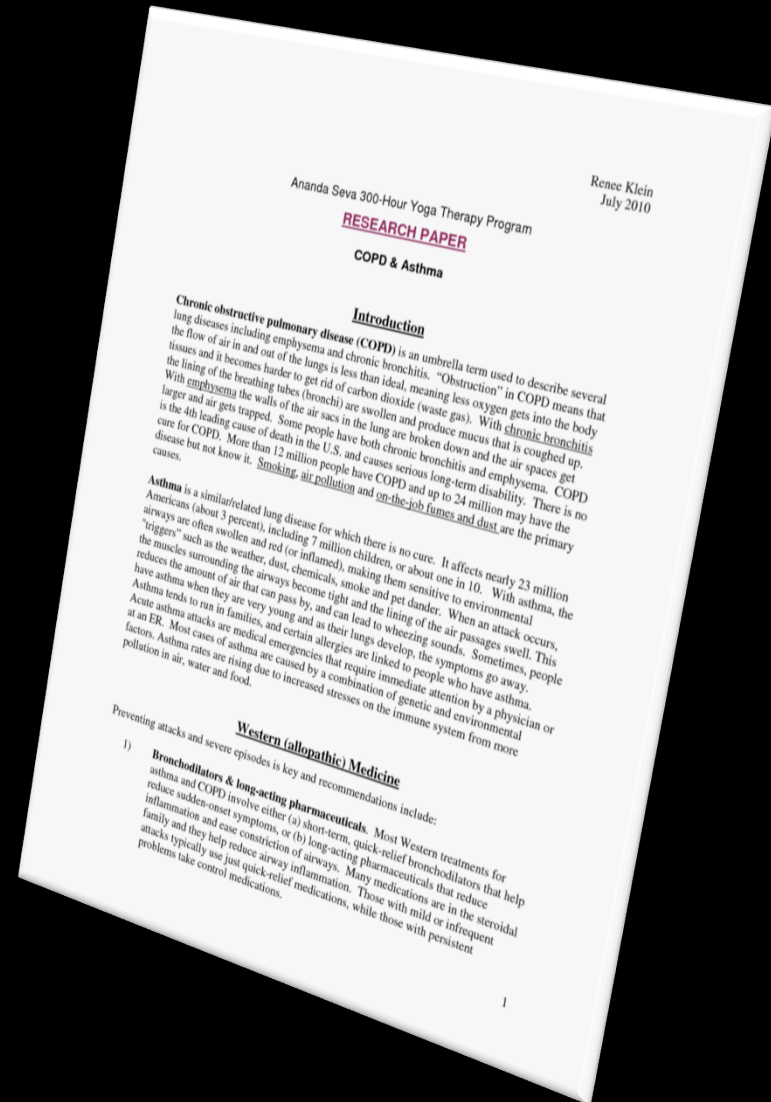
- Guide your reader
- For example,
  - Use a parallel structure
    - First, second, third
    - In this paper I will do X, Y, Z
    - List in exact order: X, Y, Z



# Audience

## Direct and explicit

- Guide your reader
- For example,
  - Use clear transitions
    - “First...second...last”
    - “Therefore...”,
    - “Because of this...”,
    - “However...”
    - “As noted above...”,
    - “Next...”



# Academic Expectations

Direct, explicit, and rhetorical in nature:

- Clearly understand the **purpose** of your assignment
- Clearly understand who your **audience** (your reader)
- If you do not know, then **ask questions**



# Cultural Expectations for Academic Writing

**C** = CLEAR. Write with words and jargon you are familiar with.

**O** = OBJECTIVE. Opinions and facts are backed by evidence.

**C** = CONCISE. Include information only needed for the purpose.

**O** = ORGANIZED. Write according to the assignment guidelines.

**A** = ACCURATE. Do research carefully and double-check facts.

**C** = CORRECT. Ensure correct spelling, grammar, punctuation.

**A** = AUDIENCE-APPROPRIATE. Meet your reader's expectations.

**T** = THOROUGH. State all points and document all sources used.

# Writing for the Disciplines

Academic Writing

**Differs by**  
**Discipline**

# Writing for the Disciplines

- An academic discipline is:
  - engineering, biology, philosophy, sociology, mathematics, geology, law, medicine, music
- Each discipline has:
  - its own **expectations** of speaking, writing, and engaging in study, reading, writing, and presenting

# Writing for the Disciplines

Different disciplines have different **expectations**:

- **Content**: What counts as evidence?
- **Organization**: How are papers structured?
- **Style**: What types of sentences are used?  
What forms of voice are used?  
How is topic introduced?  
What kind of style guide is followed?

# Expectations by Different Disciplines

## English

- Active voice
- Direct quote sources
- No headings
- MLA style guide
- Analysis
- Writing expectations:
  - “close reading”
  - “analyze”

## Science (Chemistry)

- Passive voice
- Paraphrase sources
- Headings
- CSE style guide
- Synthesis
- Writing expectations
  - “observe”
  - “explain”

Take a  
**BREAK**



GET OUT OF YOUR CHAIR,  
IT'S **KILLING** YOU





Types of essays and assignments

Writing  
**Assignment**  
**Instructions**

# Writing Assignments

Following instructions is critical for student success

**INSTRUCTIONS: Where are they?**

- Syllabus or course outline
- Handouts given in class
- Posted on eClass or Course Moodle

# Writing Assignments

Essay (for example for an English course)

Lab Report (for a Biology course)

Reflection (for a Sociology course)

Journal (for a Psychology course)

Letter to the Editor (for an English course)

Research Paper (all disciplines)

Term Paper (all disciplines)

Group Project (all disciplines)

# BREAK INTO SMALL GROUPS



# WRITING ASSIGNMENT EXAMPLES

1. What is the assignment called?
2. What are you being asked to do?
3. How many tasks are required?
4. Look for verbs.
5. How you would write this?



Take a  
**BREAK**



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# Thoughts on Writing Process

Writing Is A  
**Process**

# Writing is a *process*

Divide the assignment up into steps:

1. Prewriting

2. Drafting

3. Revising

4. Editing

# Writing is PREWRITING



# Writing Takes Time

## START WRITING EARLY

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FROM: <http://pgoh13.com>

Prewriting

Drafting

Editing

DUE DATE

Revising

# Writer-Responsible Culture

- Good writers start long before due date
- Good writers revise more than once
- Good writers learn to clarify expectations
- Good writers follow instructions

In Closing

Writer-Responsible  
**Culture**





# Writer-Responsible Culture Academic Writing

- ① Expectations and assumptions vary
- ② Rhetorical: purpose & audience
- ③ C-O-C-O-A-C-A-T: clear, objective, concise, organized, accurate, correct, audience-appropriate, thorough
- ④ Assignment instructions need clarification
- ⑤ Writing is a process

# UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

## More on Writing Process

- Understanding writing tasks
- Writing parts of an essay
- Self-editing strategies
- Grammar tips
- Research in library
- Resources on campus



# NEXT WORKSHOP

DATE: TUESDAY AUGUST 20

TIME: 12:30 – 14:30

LOCATION: ECHA L1-370



# DAY 2



International Undergraduate  
Academic Success Program

Academic Success Program  
International Undergraduate

A vibrant splash of paint in shades of green, yellow, red, and blue against a black background.

Welcome

## Presentation Topics – Day 2

1. Brainstorming and outlining techniques
2. Working on the main argument/thesis
3. Writing for the disciplines —  
engineering focus
4. Communicating in engineering contexts

# Brainstorming and Outlining

- If you don't **prepare** and **plan** before you write, the process might be more difficult
- The most effective way to prepare is different for everyone!
  - What do you do that helps you work when you get stuck?



# Writing is a *process*

Divide the assignment up into steps:

1. Prewriting

2. Drafting

3. Revising

4. Editing

# Writing is PREWRITING



# Writing Takes Time

## START WRITING EARLY

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Prewriting

Drafting

Editing

DUE DATE

Revising

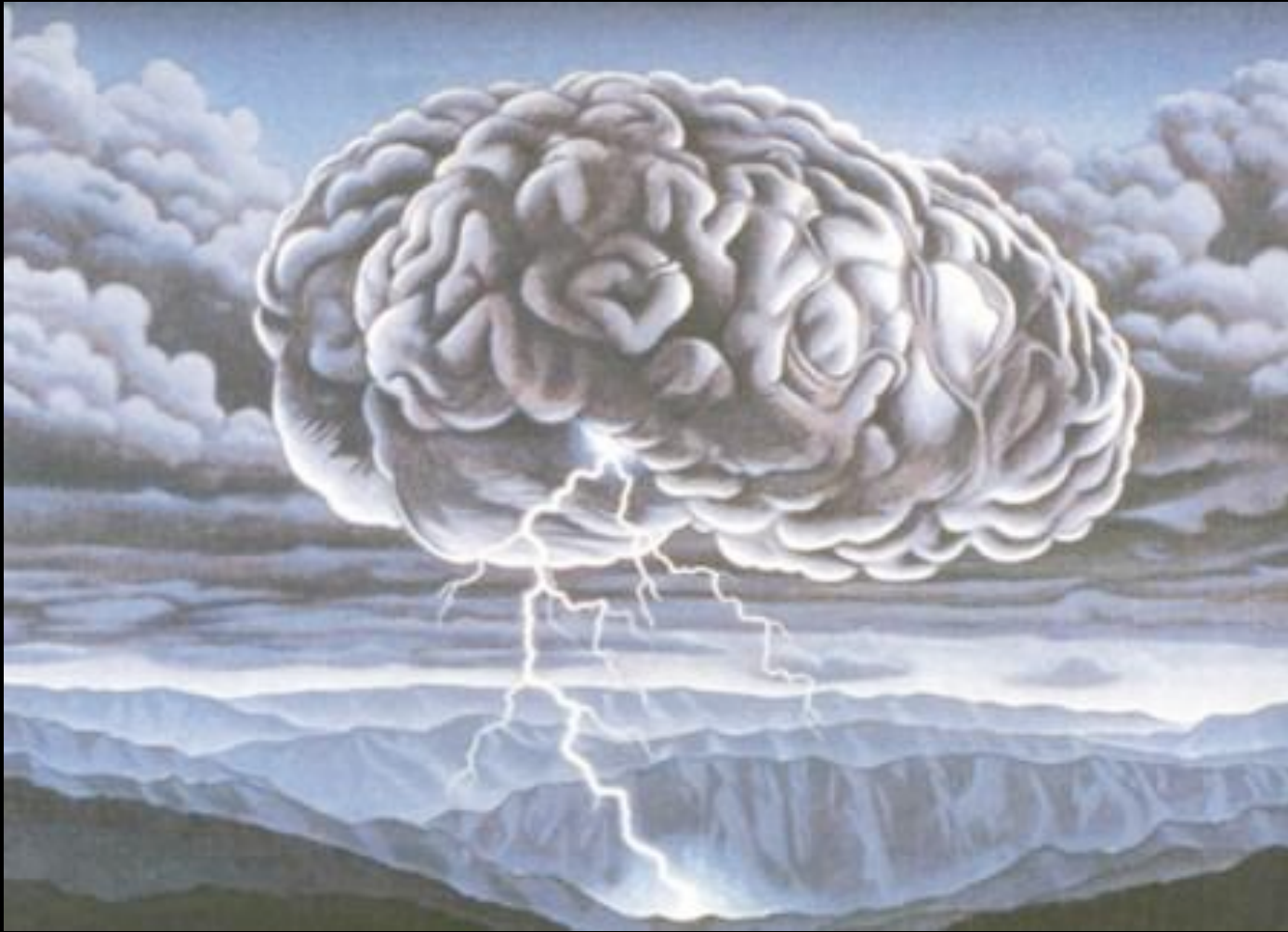
# Explore your topic

Ways to *generate ideas*:

- Ask questions
- Freewrite
- Brainstorm
- Read (articles, books, textbooks, websites) on the topic

Do this in whatever language you are most comfortable thinking in!

# Brainstorming



# Brainstorming

- Start early
- Focus on quantity of thoughts and ideas
- Don't be self-critical
- Repeat the process as many times as you need
  
- When you begin to write, don't try to use everything you brainstormed!



# Brainstorming – mind maps



# Freewrite

What is *freewriting*?

- Write on the topic **without stopping** for 5 to 15 minutes
- Get as many ideas down as possible
- **Don't correct mistakes**
- If you get stuck, write the same sentences over again, or write about how hard freewriting is: **don't stop writing!**

Once you're done, pick out key words or ideas. Choose one of these as a topic and freewrite again. This will help you learn how much you know about a topic, and identify different ways you could develop it.

# The outline

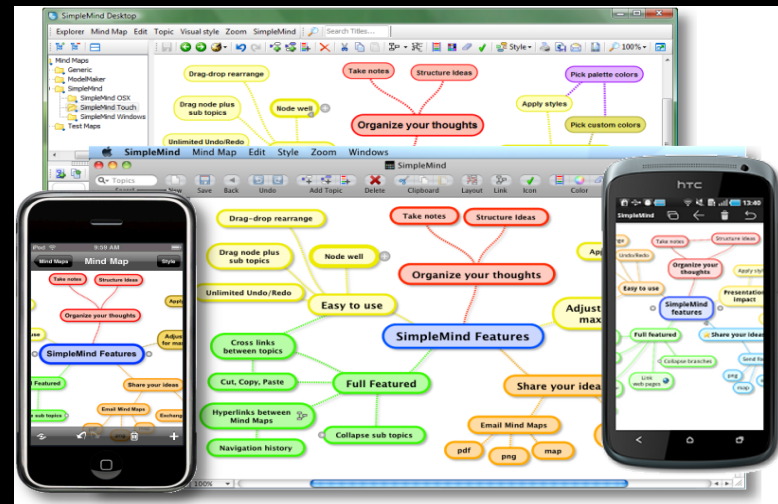
- A plan or “road map” of your paper
- Arranges your ideas and research:  
    logic and clarity
- Plans each paragraph:  
    one idea per paragraph  
    evidence for each paragraph
- Different forms of outlines for different kinds of assignments
- Work on the Introduction and conclusion last

# Organization Resources (for your laptop)

Evernote  
(free)



SimpleMind  
(\$20CAD)

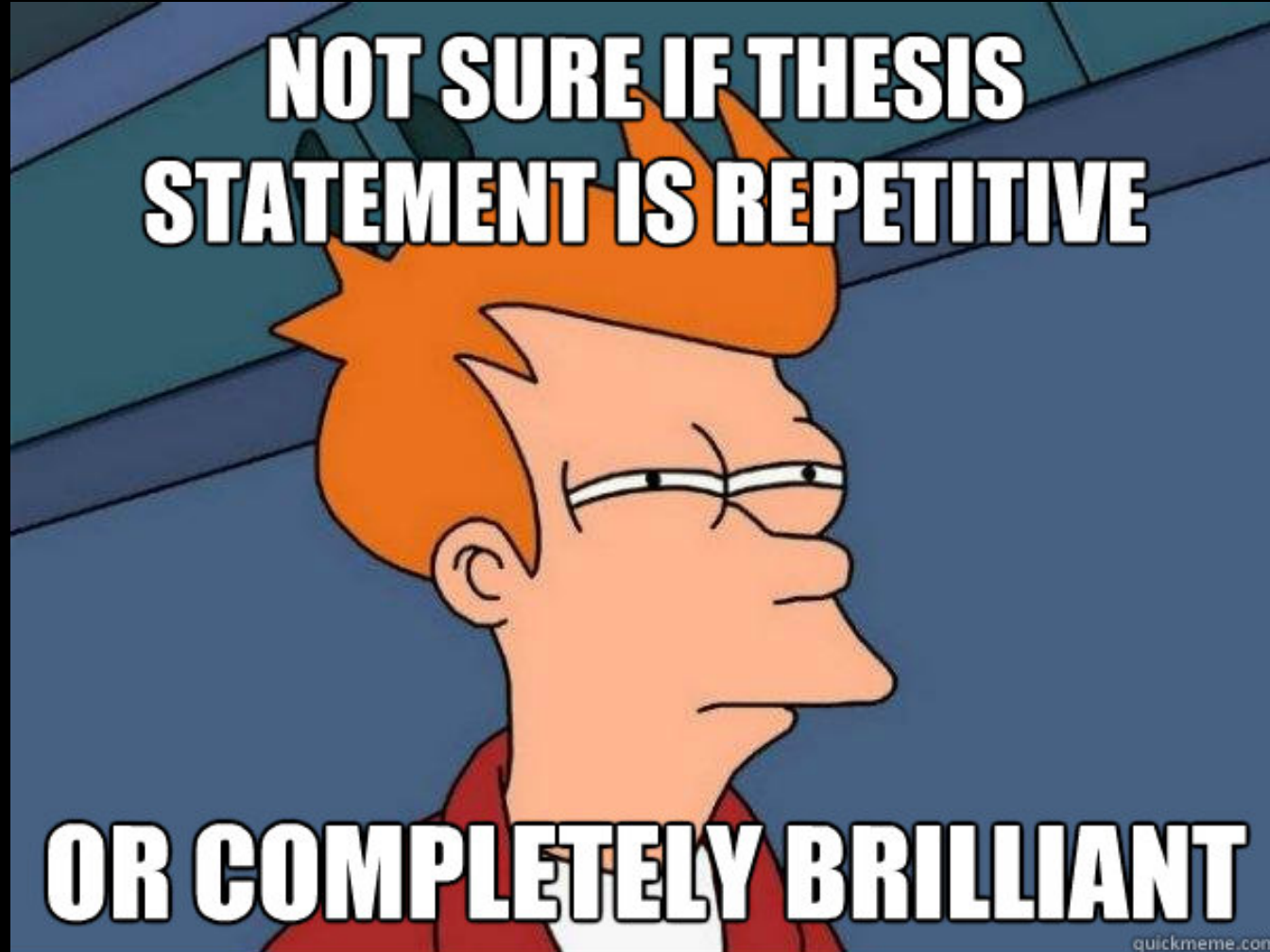


# Freewriting Practice!





Working on the main argument/thesis



# Thesis Statement Examples

**Weak:** Child poverty is a major problem with many causes and effects.

**Strong:** HIV awareness and treatment programs in Uganda have been shown to reduce child poverty.

**Weak:** Jennifer Martin's article talks about families.

**Strong:** Jennifer Martin's representation of single mothers shows the importance of government social assistance programs.



# What is a thesis?

- The **main argument/point of view** of your paper
- If the assignment is a question, the thesis should answer that question

# What makes a good thesis?

- Takes a position / makes an argument
  - Not just a summary of events or obvious factual statement

# What makes a good thesis?

- **Contains one main idea**
  - Can include further arguments that support it, but should be clearly focused on one idea

# What makes a good thesis?

- **Specific**
  - The idea isn't too broad or general

# What makes a good thesis?

- **Worth discussing / arguing**
  - Isn't based purely on personal opinion
  - Furthers the topic or area of study in some interesting way

# What makes a good thesis?

- **Addresses the assignment**
  - Does it require research or additional sources?
  - What topic are you exploring?
  - What question are you answering?

Take a  
**BREAK**



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# Writing for the Disciplines

Academic Writing

**Differs by**  
**Discipline**

# Writing for the Disciplines

- Each discipline has:
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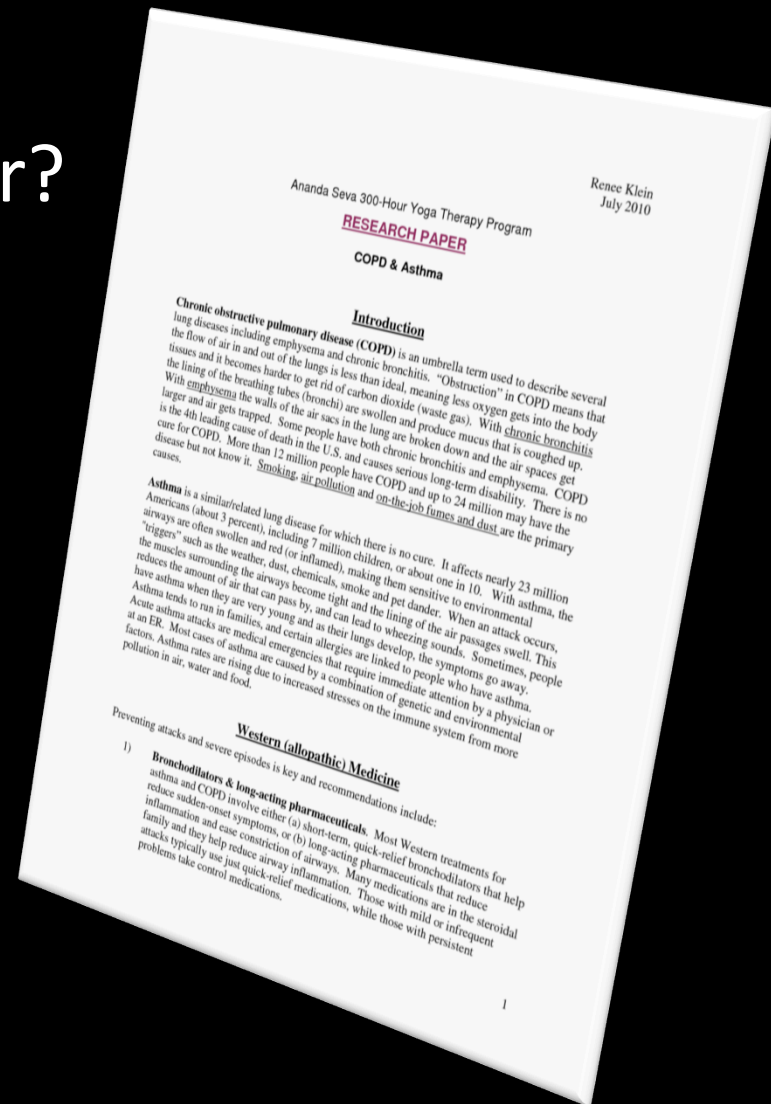
## Science (Chemistry)

- Passive voice
- Paraphrase sources
- Headings
- CSE style guide
- Synthesis
- Writing expectations
  - “observe”
  - “explain”

# Audience

## Direct and explicit

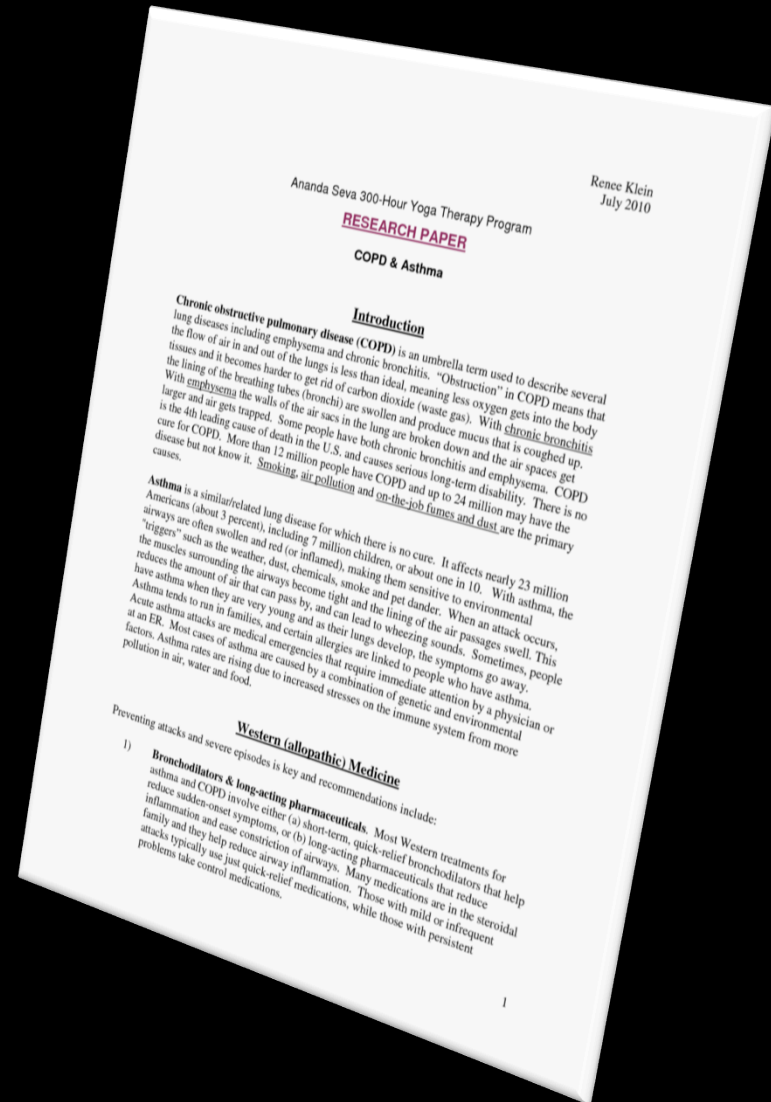
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# Audience

## Direct and explicit

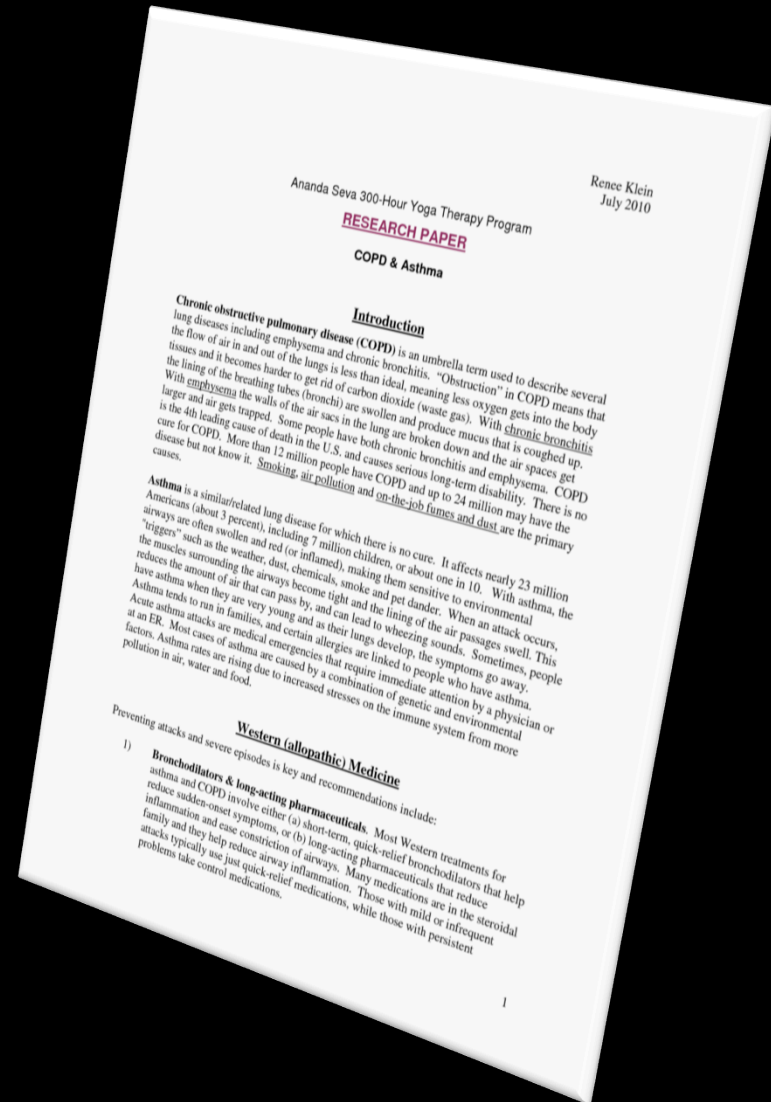
- Guide your reader
- For example,
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    - First, second, third
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# Audience

## Direct and explicit

- Guide your reader
- For example,
  - Use clear transitions
    - “First...second...last”
    - “Therefore...”,
    - “Because of this...”,
    - “However...”
    - “As noted above...”,
    - “Next...”





# Two Sample Engineering Assignments

- What is the assignment asking you to do?
- How should you organize your writing?
- Who are you writing for?
- What do you notice that is important?
- Start to write a thesis statement for this assignment

# Communicating in Engineering Contexts



# Sample Paper

1. Headings and subheadings
2. Parallel structure
3. Explicit and direct language
4. Transitions between sentences and between paragraphs
5. What else do you notice?

# Writing Engineering Reports



Purdue Writing Lab

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/647/01/>

# Report Purpose

- **Describe research**
  - Explain problem or issue studied
  - Discuss research method
  - Describe data collected
  - Describe research findings
  - Explain implications

# Report Purpose

- Inform readers of research results **precisely, concisely, and specifically**
  - They shouldn't have to read whole report to get essential points

# Report Format and Organization

- **Reports generally include these sections in this order:**
  - Abstract
  - Introduction
  - Literature Review
  - Methodology
  - Results
  - Discussion
  - Conclusion



# Report Format and Organization

- **But be aware that order is flexible in that sections can be combined**
  - Some journals combine introduction and literature review
  - Others have the results and discussion combined

# Report Format and Organization

- **Abstract**

- *Always* comes first
- Microcosm of entire paper – contains key info from each section
  - Contains essential information *only* – it is brief!
  - Covers research highlights
  - Gives the research problem and/or main objective of the research
  - Indicates the methodology used
  - Presents the main findings and conclusions

# Report Format and Organization

- **Background/Introduction**

- Explains the research problem and its context
  - Explains importance of the problem (Why does it matter? Why is more information needed?)
  - Explains reason and goals for study
  - Explains the limitations of the research performed

**You want your reader to fully understand the significance of your research**

# Report Format and Organization

- **Literature Review**

- Summarizes and *evaluates* the literature that you have used in your study by considering:

- How that literature has contributed to your area of research
    - The strengths and weaknesses of previous studies
    - How that literature informs your own research and understanding of the research problem

# Report Format and Organization

- **Methodology**

- Explains how data was gathered/generated
- Explains how data was analyzed
- Assumes reader understands material
  - Does not include explanatory material
- Is in *past tense and passive voice*
  - “A 1” piece of coil was cut”
    - The research has been carried out
    - It is the research, and not your activities, that are of interest

# Report Format and Organization

- **Results**

- Visually *and* textually represents research findings

- Visual representation of results:

- Graphs, tables, diagrams, charts

- Explanatory text:

- Text points out the most significant portions of research findings

- Indicates key trends or relationships

- Highlights expected and/or unexpected findings

# Report Format and Organization

- **Discussion**

- Assesses and comments on research results

- Includes:

- Explanation for Results

- Comments on unexpected results, offering hypothesis for them

- Comparison to literature

- Does your research confirm previous studies?  
Deviate from them?

- Explanation for how info can be applied in broader context

# Report Format and Organization

- **Summary**

- Discusses:

- What was learned through research
    - What remains to be learned
    - Weaknesses and shortcomings of study
    - Strengths of study
    - Possible applications of study (how it can be used)
    - Recommendations



# Headings and Subheadings

- **Headings and subheadings guide readers' attention**
- **Can be used to keep track of various parts of project:**
  - For example: “Making Components,” “Assembling Components,” and “Testing Assembly”
- **They should be:**
  - Specific and helpful
  - Used to break up text and “chunk” information
  - Used to guide readers' attention

# Language and Vocabulary

- **Reports should be easily accessible**
  - Be straightforward and concise
  - Use simple terms, not jargon and technical terms
  - Be specific and not general
    - Use concrete numbers and metaphors or similes

# Visual Design

- **A report's visual design can make or break its communication success**
- **Visual Design includes:**
  - Use of graphs and other graphics
  - Use of white space

# IN CLOSING

- Start planning your assignments early
- Find a preparation and writing technique that works for you
- Writing is a process
- Spend time revising your thesis and seek feedback from a trusted individual
- Writing is communicating!
  - Communication style depends on context (engineering, mathematics, English, etc.)

# NEXT WORKSHOP

DATE: THURSDAY AUGUST 22

TIME: 12:30 – 14:30

LOCATION: ECHA L1-370



# DAY 3



International Undergraduate  
Academic Success Program

Academic Success Program  
International Undergraduate

A vibrant splash of paint in shades of green, yellow, red, and blue against a black background. The splash is dynamic and energetic, with droplets and streaks of color.

Welcome

# Day 3

1. Review
2. Campus writing and studying resources
3. Online writing and studying resources

Ask questions any time!



# Cultures of writing

- Writing expectations **vary** in different cultures and contexts
- At the University of Alberta, writing is expected to be **direct** and **explicit** — a “**writer-responsible**” culture
- Always ask yourself **whom you are writing for**
- Always clarify any questions about expectations with your professor!

# Structuring your writing

- Guide the reader with **parallel structure**
  - The argument contains three parts...
  - First, second, last...
- Transitions between sentences and paragraphs
  - Therefore, however, because...

# Interpreting assignments

- What kind of assignment is it?
  - Essay
  - Lab report
- Look for **verbs** for hints about how to approach the writing

# Cultural Expectations for Academic Writing

C = CLEAR

O = OBJECTIVE

C = CONCISE

O = ORGANIZED

A = ACCURATE

C = CORRECT

A = AUDIENCE-APPROPRIATE

T = THOROUGH

# Writing is a *process*

Divide the assignment up into steps:

1. Prewriting

2. Drafting

3. Revising

4. Editing

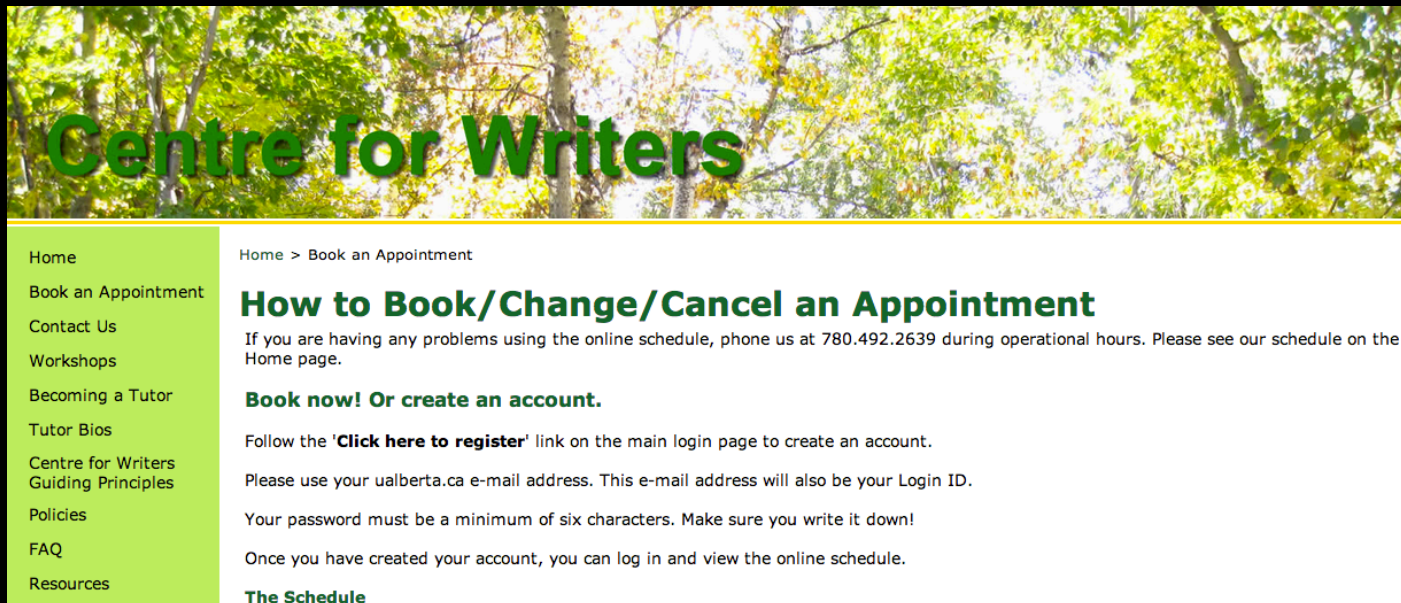
# Thesis Statements

- A good thesis statement contains:
  - The main argument/point of view
  - A clear position on the topic
  - One main idea
  - A specific topic
  - A position worth discussing

# Campus Resources



# Centre for Writers

A screenshot of the Centre for Writers website. The header features a photograph of trees with green and yellow leaves, with the text "Centre for Writers" overlaid in a large, green, sans-serif font. Below the header is a navigation menu on the left with a light green background, listing: Home, Book an Appointment, Contact Us, Workshops, Becoming a Tutor, Tutor Bios, Centre for Writers Guiding Principles, Policies, FAQ, and Resources. The main content area has a white background and shows the breadcrumb "Home > Book an Appointment". The main heading is "How to Book/Change/Cancel an Appointment" in bold green text. Below this is a paragraph: "If you are having any problems using the online schedule, phone us at 780.492.2639 during operational hours. Please see our schedule on the Home page." This is followed by a bold green sub-heading: "Book now! Or create an account." and three paragraphs of instructions: "Follow the 'Click here to register' link on the main login page to create an account.", "Please use your ualberta.ca e-mail address. This e-mail address will also be your Login ID.", and "Your password must be a minimum of six characters. Make sure you write it down!". The final paragraph states: "Once you have created your account, you can log in and view the online schedule." At the bottom of the main content area, there is a link for "The Schedule".

- 1-42 Assiniboia Hall (in the basement) — book appointments online or attend monthly writing workshops (with food!)
- FREE one-on-one peer tutoring
- Open to students of all disciplines
- Bring *any* writing assignment except take-home exams



# University of Alberta libraries



## Rutherford Library

- Humanities disciplines
- Lots of great study space
- The “Harry Potter room”

## Cameron Library

- Science disciplines
- Tons of computers, study space, and meeting rooms
- Two engineering librarians



# University Wellness Services



- Workshops on studying, exam-taking, and writing
- Opportunity to “de-stress” at the end of each term

# Online Resources



# Library Research U of A Library System: Helpful, friendly, knowledgeable



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### SEARCH THE LIBRARY

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Discovery](#)

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### LIBRARY SERVICES

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### digital & special COLLECTIONS



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Provinces](#)



[Samuel Steele  
Collection](#)



[Education &  
Research Archive](#)



[Bruce Peel Special  
Collections](#)

# U of A libraries

- Search for and reserve books
- Get citation guides and help figuring out how to cite sources
- Online databases: NEOS, EBSCOhost, JSTOR
- Discipline-specific databases of information

# Online resources

- **Purdue OWL:** [owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)
  - Helpful style guides for different citation styles
  - Workshops on writing
  - Grammar help
- **Google Scholar**
  - Search scholarly literature
  - Access chapters or samples
- **Self Control**
  - Free app that blocks your access to specific websites
- **Freedom**
  - \$10 app that blocks your access to the internet for up to eight hours
- **Team Viz**

# Resources recap

- **People:** professors, teaching assistants, peers, librarians, tutors (C4W), mentors
- **Books:** handbooks, style guides, writing and research books, grammar guides
- **Web:** library databases, productivity apps, Purdue OWL, Google Scholar
- **Software:** LaTeX, BiblioTeX





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