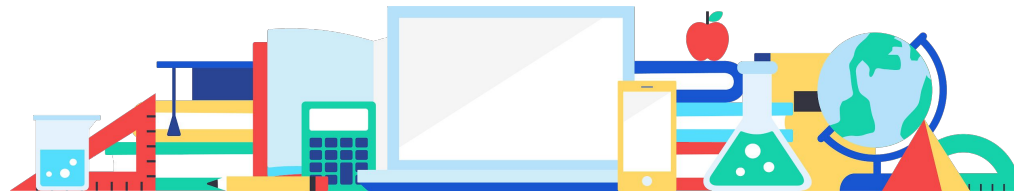




Essay Planning

Updated September 23, 2022



In this training

You will

- Acknowledge your role as a writing coach
- Review what to expect in a session
- Learn strategies to help students in the beginning phases of writing essays:
Planning & Drafting

For strategies on helping students in the revision and editing stages of writing be sure to review our [Essay Feedback training](#) too!

Your Role



Your Role

Develop a Writer

Throughout their life students will be asked to “explain, inform, justify, enumerate, summarize and describe” often through writing (Hochman & Wexler 3). Your role is to help them develop this skill set.

You’re a helper! That’s why you’re here, but “fixing” grammar issues or “rewriting” a student’s thesis will only help the paper improve, not the writer. They won’t be able to take this skill with them throughout their life. Instead, think of the essay/paper as the vehicle we use to help the student develop key skills and confidence!

If you only remember one thing from this training: Our goal is to develop the student as a writer, not write a better paper for them.



Be Patient

Writing is cognitively demanding

Writing requires executive functioning skills that most of us don't fully develop until our 20s!

We're asking students to:

- *Strategize* when selecting a topic & details
- *Plan* a road map for a concision
- *Organize* information into logical order
- *Focus* on the task at hand (and not their phone notifications)
- *Sustain* this effort and self-monitor

As a coach, keep this in mind as you work with students and maintain a caring, patient approach.

Be Culturally Competent

Culture's impact on writing

Culture determines acceptable ways of presenting information.

Exaggeration, emotionalism, restraint, understatement, conciseness, clarity, etc. are all a matter of stylistic choice and influenced by our own lived experiences.

Be mindful of the preferences you're bringing to the writing process.

What to expect in your writing sessions



Types of Writing

Students come to UPchieve with assignments that cover a wide range of subjects, but you can expect to see mostly these types of essays:

- **Expository:** Explains and informs (including compare and contrast)
- **Narrative:** Process or event in chronological or sequential order
- **Descriptive:** Uses the five senses evoke images of people, places, and things
- **Argumentative or persuasive:** Presents both sides of an issue, including evidence, and appeals to logic to support one side
- **Literary analysis:** Closely studying a text, interpreting its meanings, and making an argument based in evidence from the text

Stages of Writing

What are the four stages of writing?

Your support will change depending on the student's stage of writing. In each stage students engage in different activities:

- **Planning:** Research topics, generate content ideas, outline, develop strong thesis
- **Drafting:** Write full sentences and paragraphs based on an outline (students should do this step mostly independently)
- **Revising:** Clarify or alter content or structure
- **Editing:** Ensure proper grammar, punctuation, mechanics, citation

Sample Session Structure

- Welcome & Build Rapport
- Understand the assignment
- Assess the needs of the writer
- Set expectations: What can realistically be done in the session
- Provide structured help based on their phase of writing
 - ◆ Planning
 - ◆ Drafting
 - ◆ Revising
 - ◆ Editing
- Celebrate progress!

Start The Session



The Basics

- Check the About This Session feature
- Start with a friendly greeting
- Ask how you can help them!
- Understand the assignment: Read through the prompt, rubric, etc.
- Assess what the student needs and start there
 - ◆ Example Questions:
 - What have you already started working on?
 - Where are you getting stuck?

Set Expectations

Given the assignment, time frame, the writer's needs, and your availability

- Decide on the course of action and be explicit
- Share your role
 - ◆ Example:
 - Student: *"I need help writing my opening paragraph"*
 - Coach Response: *"Great, I can help you brainstorm what to write here, but you'll need to write the paragraph yourself. Let's get started!"*

Think & Write

Applying Your New Knowledge

We've added a few reflection questions on blue slides to help you process new information!

Take out a piece of paper or open a new word doc and **write down how you would respond to this help request.**



Heres the question Although they cannot control everything in their life, can they control their responses to these outside elements? If so, does that mean each person is ultimately in control of their own destiny? Why or why not?

4:40 pm

Example Responses

There are many great ways to respond! For example...

→ **Ask questions to understand more about the assignment:**

◆ *Thanks for sharing the question, do you have any other details about the assignment like word count or points that you should cover?*

→ **Ask a question to assess the learner's needs:**

◆ *Looks like an interesting question! Have you started writing your response yet?*

Provide Structured Help



The Basics

No matter the phase of the writing process, always...

- **Ask questions**
- **Validate frustrations** and help students move past them
- Provide **praise and encouragement**
- Provide **time** for students **to think and process**
- Request **more information** if something is unclear
 - ◆ *Can you tell me more about...?*

Our Favorite Questions

Questions help student develop critical thinking skills

Use questions to help students articulate and examine the *reasons for their choices*

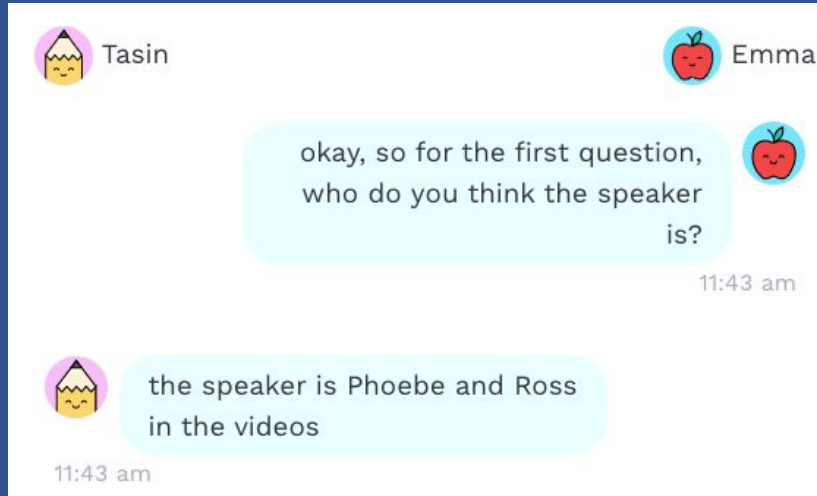
- What do you want to say?
- What is your main idea here?
- What do you want your reader to know in this paragraph?
- How does this connect with the previous statements?

Use questions to help students developing critical awareness of the *reader's point of view*

- Why does the reader want or need to know about that?
- What information do you have that the reader does not?

Think & Write

Why are questions a powerful coaching tool?



Our Response

Questions engage students to actively participate in learning

You already know you can't just do the assignment for the student—so how can you empower them to do most of the work? Questions are your number one tool!

Questions can uncover the students **thought process**, **advance** their **thinking** and **guide** students to take the next logical step.



Planning Help



Planning

Focus of the session

- Development of thoughts, ideas, and organization

In the planning stage students should

- Prepare to write
 - ◆ Understand the prompt/purpose, topic, and audience
 - ◆ Germinate a response/main idea
- Gather information to write
 - ◆ Research, Brainstorm, Close Read
- Develop a thesis statement and introduction
- Outline their composition
 - ◆ Put ideas and details into categories
 - ◆ Determine essential information
 - ◆ Arrange ideas

In the following sections we'll define each of these steps and provide some ways to help students in each step of the planning process.

**Note these processes aren't linear and sessions will not cover all of them!*

Prepare



3 Key Ideas

Establish a shared understanding of the topic, audience, and purpose

Using the prompt, assignment directions, etc. help students identify:

- Audience
- Topic
- Purpose (their goal or purpose in relation to that audience or what they hope to accomplish in the paper)

Questions to ask

- Can you put the prompt in your own words?
- Who are you writing this paper for? What do they need to know?
- Why are you writing this paper? Explain, persuade
- What are you writing about?

Germinate a main idea or point

Not yet a thesis statement but something...

Now it's time for students to think about what they want to say and why. This can be a kernel of an idea to a fully formed opinion depending on the knowledge students have about the topic.

This is important before moving on to “gathering information” so that students can efficiently sort through relevant and irrelevant information.

Questions to ask

- What is your main idea here?
- What do you want to say?
- What do you believe?
- What does the research/text support?

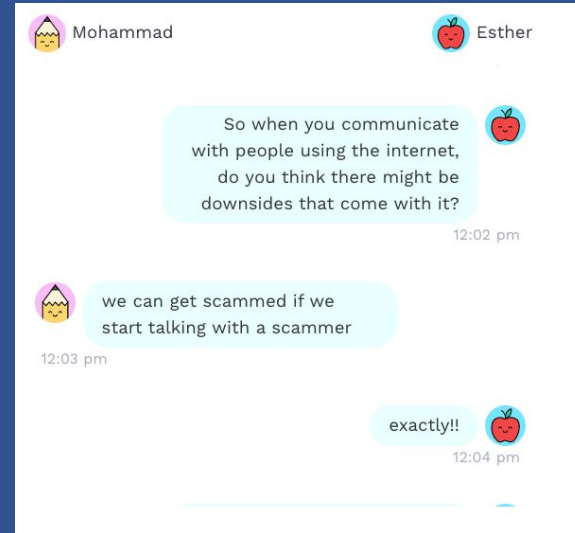
Think & Write

What question would you ask a student to help them prepare to write for this assignment?

People create computing innovations and not every effect of a computing innovation is anticipated in advance. As well, a single effect can be viewed as both beneficial and harmful by different people, or even by the same person. Can you think of an impact that the Internet has had that can be looked at as both beneficial AND harmful?

Real Session Response

Coach Esther used questions to help Mohammad germinate an idea.



Gather information



Gather information: Brainstorm

Student has some background knowledge

If the student has covered the topic in school, read the reference text, or has some background knowledge you can use brainstorming activities to help them “brain dump” the information they know about the topic.

Brainstorming tools

- Listing
- Clustering (branching or webbing)
- Answer: Who, what, where, when, how, why

Gather information: Research

Student doesn't have background knowledge

If the student is expected to research about the topic on their own you can use research guidelines to help them gather information.

Researching guidelines

- Brainstorm precise keywords to search
- Help skim search results for words that pop up frequently and add to search terms
- Identify good sources:
 - ◆ Is the source an authority on the topic?
 - ◆ Is the information accurate?
 - ◆ Is the source bias?
 - ◆ Is the source up to date?

Gather information: From a Text

Student needs help understanding or finding evidence in a text

For literary analysis assignments, close reading is the careful, sustained interpretation of a short passage of a text. To successfully write an analysis, students should **closely read** a text by giving focused attention to individual words, the syntax, the order in which the sentences unfold ideas, as well as formal structure. This will help them gather information from the text to support their composition.

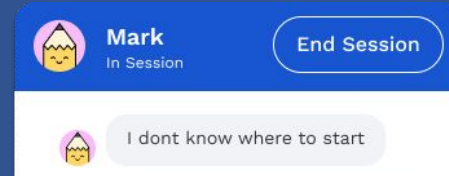
Close Reading guidelines:

- Have student read the passage at least twice
- Ensure understanding/look up words/ask questions
- Re-examine the text in order to build metaphoric meaning

Feel free to copy & paste our helpful [Close Reading Guide](#) in UPchieve's document editor and work through it with a student!

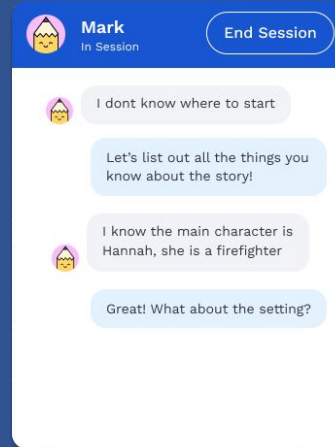
Think & Write

How would you help this student completing a plot summary of a book he read in class?



Real Session Response

Coach Sarah used a brainstorming to help Mark remember the details of the text.



Develop a Thesis & Introduction



Develop a Thesis Statement

Definition of a Thesis Statement

- A sentence that conveys the main theme of the entire composition
- For most compositions, the thesis statement of an essay should outline the topic of the essay and the arguments that the author will make.

Questions to ask students

- Given what you know about the topic and the purpose of this essay/assignment what is the main point you want to make?
- What is a statement could you make that conveys the main theme that you want to discuss?
- What are you trying to say about this topic?
- What main point does the evidence support?

Types of Thesis Statements

Provide these examples for students:

- *A personal judgement:* It is urgent that problems associated with educational inequity be addressed.
- *Advice or directions:* There are a number of impactful strategies to make education more equitable...
- *Statement of consequences (cause and effect):* If educational equity is not addressed, our society will fail.
- *An argument for or against an idea:* Using the internet to democratize access to education will increase equity.
- *Compare and contrast:* There are significant differences between the education people from different socio-economic status' receive in the US.

Evaluating a Thesis

Common Challenges in Thesis Writing

- Too vague
- Does not answer the prompt fully
- Isn't based in evidence

Questions to ask

- Can you tell what the rest of the essay will be about from reading the thesis?
- Does the thesis achieve the purpose of the writing? (Answer the prompt)
- Does the thesis engage the intended audience?

Develop an introduction

An example formula to write a good introduction

- General statement about the topic
- Specific statement about the topic
- Thesis statement

Questions to Ask

- What general information should readers know about their topic?
- What is a specific statement that the audience should know to understand the thesis statement?

Provide an Example

- [General] Penguins are among the most popular animals. [Specific] However, they have become an endangered species as sea ice disappears from their habitats. [Thesis] Rising sea levels are among the most dangerous effects on climate change and should be viewed as an urgent issue.

**Adapted from The Writing Revolution*

Select or Create an Outline



Outlining

Information is gathered but now it's time to sort!

This is actually the most important (and difficult) part of the writing process

Outlining requires students to

- Identify gaps in knowledge/comprehension
- Develop organizational skills
- Categorize information
- Put information into a logical sequence
- Avoid repetition and irrelevant information

We'll provide you both outline templates and sample questions to guide students through these complex processes!

Select an Outline

Outlines should differ based on writing

Not all outlines will look the same. Sometime teachers will assign structure to follow, others will provide sample outlines, and still others will leave the format up to the student.

We've provided sample outlines for the most common type of writing assignments but if you have a favorite outline, feel free to use it—just make sure it fits the writing genre or assignment!

Familiarize yourself with the structure of the types of essays you may encounter

- Essay Types (Appendix in this training)
- Review UPchieve's [Sample Essay Outlines](#) (feel free to bookmark)

Sample Generic Outline

- **Topic**
- **Thesis statement**
- **Introduction**
 - ◆ General statement about the topic
 - ◆ Specific statement about the topic the reader needs to know to understand your thesis
 - ◆ Thesis statement
- **Body Paragraph #1: Main Idea**
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
- **Body Paragraph #2: Main Idea**
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
- **Body Paragraph #3: Main Idea**
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
 - ◆ Supporting Detail
- **Conclusion**
 - ◆ Summarize main points/argument
 - ◆ Restate thesis statement

Complete an Outline



Guide students to complete the outline

Help students...

- Write the main idea of each paragraph as a phrase or category
- Write the supporting details for each main idea
- Develop an introductory paragraph (if not already complete)
- Develop conclusion by re-wording the thesis and summarizing the essay

Main Ideas for Paragraphs

Help determine essential information

Differentiating between relevant and irrelevant information is a hard and important skill. At various parts of the planning process coaches should be asking students the questions below.

Questions to ask students

- What are the 3-5 most important details?
- What should the audience know about this topic?
- What is an interesting idea but maybe not relevant for this composition/assignment?
- Can you group these ideas by what they have in common?
- What idea is the least relevant?

Supporting Details

Organize thoughts into relevant supporting details

Similarly to main ideas, collaborating on this stage will help ensure students have coherency in their writing—that they are making points that relate to the main topic of each paragraph and ultimately their thesis.

Questions to ask students

- What quotes, outside information or evidence can you use to strengthen/support this idea?
- Does the reader need to know what/who/when/why/where/how to understand our main idea?

Refine Order

Ensure logical flow of information

Now that students have their thesis, main points and supporting details, ask them to step back and make sure their information is logically sequenced.

Questions to ask students

- Is anything repetitive?
- If expository event: Is information arranged by chronological order?
- If argumentative: Is information arranged in a way that supports your argument?
(Evidence to support your viewpoint is last)
- If descriptive: Can the reader follow your visualization?

Develop a conclusion

- **A conclusion should**
 - ◆ Restate and reinforce the thesis statement
- **A conclusion could**
 - ◆ Summarize main points of the essay
 - ◆ Offer a solution or recommendation
 - ◆ Justify a position
- **Tips to reword essay sentences for the conclusion:**
 - ◆ Combine two thoughts with basic conjunctions
 - ◆ Add an appositive
 - New York City, the largest city in the US, is a major tourist attraction because of its nightlife.
- Start with subordinating conjunctions
 - Although monarch butterflies have bounced back from past threats, the hazards caused by people may be too great to overcome.

Feel free to copy and paste our [rewording worksheet](#) in the document editor to review with your student!

Think & Write

How would you help this student develop a more robust outline?

Topic: The harmful effects of underage drinking.

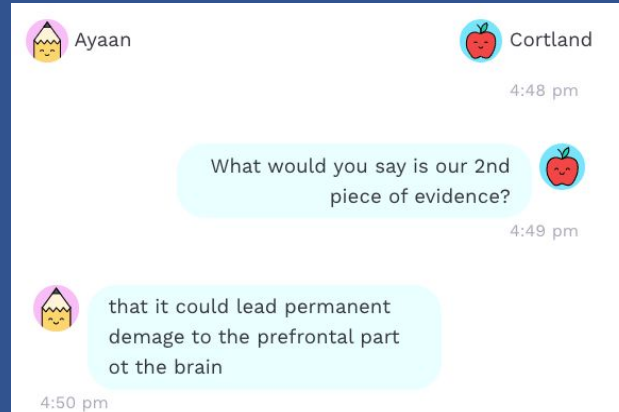
Conclusion: despite some reason for lowering the legal drinking age ,it should remain at 21

Summarized argument: The legal drinking age should not be lower than 21.

Argument sentence from passage about alcohol: "it is eminently dangerous, particularly to our youth"

Real Session Response

Coach Cortland used questions to help Ayaan create main paragraph topics from the evidence they gathered.



Drafting Help



Drafting

→ **Focus of the session**

- ◆ Help students start and restart
- ◆ Encourage them to build full sentences/paragraphs

→ **In the drafting stage students should**

- ◆ Write full sentences and paragraphs (ideally from their outline)

→ **Coach role**

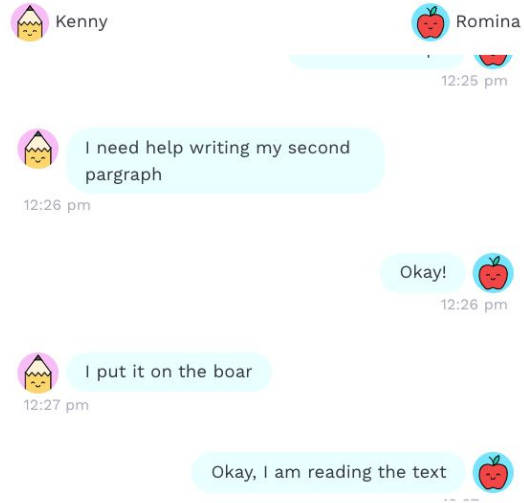
- ◆ Your role is never to write any sentence for a student, this could be considered plagiarism
- ◆ You can help them revisit the planning stage and *empower students to feel confident to write a draft on their own and come back for revisions*

Drafting Challenges

Many drafting challenges are actually missed planning steps

Many students try to skip the planning stage of writing and go right to writing their essay. This will be the most common cause of drafting help requests.

Read the real session example below:

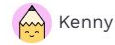


Solution: Revisit Planning Strategies

Real Session Example

In this session Kenny **didn't have an outline** for his essay so he **struggled to add details to support his second paragraph's main idea.**

Coach Romina **used questions** to elicit more details to support Kenny's main idea!



Kenny



Romina

12:54 pm

Do we know why Sister Aloysius wants to throw Donald out of the school?



12:55 pm

Is it related to her personality or because she truly thinks Father Flynn is guilty, or both?



12:55 pm



she think he is guilty

12:56 pm

Celebrate Progress



Celebrating

Encourage students

Remember students took the brave step to come to UPchieve for help. Even if they didn't come away with a "perfect" essay after one session, it's important to celebrate progress so they keep working hard to develop as a writer and also come back to UPchieve for more help!

At the end of your session

- Acknowledge two things the student did well in the paper
- Acknowledge two areas that your work together improved in the paper, and how the student made that happen!

You've got this!



Jump in!

Whew, that was a lot of information

Don't worry about being perfect, you'll learn and grow as you help students. Each request will be different and simply being a supportive coach will help students develop their confidence and improve as writers.

When in doubt reach out!

- Join our coach community and share out tricky situations or get feedback on how you answered a request



Appendix A: Potential Tricky Coaching Situations



Tricky Coaching Situations

A student is writing a paper that requires background knowledge

We don't expect you to be a content expert! However, you may still be able to **help ensure ideas are presented in a logical and impactful way.**

We generally ask that you spend up to 5 minutes familiarizing yourself with content; ask the student to point you to the most relevant resource.

Tricky Coaching Situations

A student would like you to write sentences or re-write their thesis for them

- Ask questions to help students revise their work on their own
- Remind them it's a process, not perfection. Help them write anything down and worry about "right" word or structure after
- Feel free to end the session if the student continues to pressure you to write for them

Tricky Coaching Situations

A student is under a tight deadline

- Acknowledge this stressful situation
- Set realistic expectations for your time together
- Encourage them to make another request if you have to go

Appendix B: Types of Essays



Argumentative/ Persuasive Essays

Argumentative essays are used to convey an opinion about a certain topic or statement. They require evidence (from outside sources) to establish an argument, which are often covered in the body paragraphs of the essay.

- A strong argumentative essay will indicate that the author has considered all positions by including a rebuttal. The **rebuttal** the part of the argument where the author first explains the opposing argument, and then explains why this argument is irrelevant, incomplete, or incorrect.
- It is important to **understand the audience** for this type of essay, as persuasive essays must be able to communicate effectively to the target audience.
 - ◆ For example, a persuasive essay that argues for greater regulation of the economy would have a very different audience from a persuasive essay that argues that more people should eat breakfast every day.

Expository Essays

Expository essays are unbiased evidence-based essays that are used to provide readers with information.

- In contrast, persuasive essays are biased evidence-based essays because they are used to persuade the reader to agree with their argument.
- They tend to focus on the **5 Ws** (who, what, when, where, why).
- In an expository essay, each body paragraph should ideally only cover one topic.
- The order of each paragraph in an expository essay is important, as expository essays should follow a logical chronological order.

Literary Analysis

Literary analysis means closely studying a text, interpreting its meanings, and making an argument based in evidence from the text.

- A literary analysis is not a summary of a literary work. Instead, it is an argument about the work that expresses a writer's personal perspective, interpretation, judgment, or critical evaluation of the work.
- Literary analysis cover many topics, typically in English classes:
 - ◆ Character, setting, plot, theme, dialogue, imagery, figures of speech, tone, rhyme, point of view are all up for interpretation

Narrative Essays

Narrative essays are used to tell stories and can be fictional or non-fictional.

- They do not require sources like argumentative and expository essays do.
- Narrative essays test your creative writing ability and accordingly have fewer structural requirements.
 - ◆ Even if there are no explicit introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs, the essay should still have a logical flow.

Descriptive Essays

Descriptive essays provide detailed descriptions of something (places, objects, etc).

- While they are less structured than argumentative and expository essays, they are more structured than narrative essays because they are still used to convey information.
- Descriptive essays are a great opportunity to use figurative language, unique word choices, and other creative techniques.