The Blue Book

A Guide to English 105

and

English 106

Des Moines Area Community College

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Finally, because composition course expectations are constantly changing, I would also like to hear from you. Feel free to contact me to help improve future editions of this reference.

Good luck this semester!

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Welcome to the composition program at Des Moines Area Community College! As English faculty, we hope that our time together will be interesting, challenging (in all the best ways) and worthwhile. We also hope that by reading *The Blue Book*, you will learn more about what takes place in DMACC composition classes, such as information about teacher expectations, sample assignments, and grading standards, and that you will discover guidelines for becoming a more successful composition student. As you read, make notes about any questions you have, so that you can ask your instructor later, *before* an assignment is due.

English 105 (Composition I) and English 106 (Composition II) are courses designed to improve your communication skills so that you can be more successful in other classes and on the job. Although the work will be focused on improving your writing skills, other related areas—listening actively, reading critically, analyzing and evaluating research, and using language effectively—will also be emphasized in these courses.

*The Blue Book* is divided into five sections:

- What to Expect in English 105 and English 106
- Overview of English 105
- Overview of English 106
- Common Composition Errors
- Helpful Websites

In addition to helping you get off to a good start in your composition class, *The Blue Book* will also be useful as a reference: The fourth segment, Common Composition Errors (see pages 23-37), will help you identify some writing problems throughout the course so that you can discuss them more easily with your instructors, tutors, and fellow students.

*The Blue Book*, however, should not be seen as a substitute for your instructor’s syllabus or for DMACC’s *Student Manual*. Individual course expectations, procedures, policies, and course schedule (including due dates) found in your instructor’s syllabus should be followed closely. This guide merely describes those expectations and experiences common to most composition courses. The questions which follow anticipate some common concerns students have about composition courses at the college level.
What is my role as a college student?

Your DMACC composition course is designed to help you expand your knowledge base and skills. In short, you are here to learn something. Throughout this process, you will continue to improve yourself: You will be striving to become a better citizen, parent, employee, or whatever role you play in the greater society. But that’s not all. As a college student, you enjoy the privilege of having experts teach you how to teach yourself. Once you achieve this ability, you establish credibility as an educated individual. You become more curious about the world around you, and, often, the world becomes more curious about you.

Unfortunately, some students enter composition courses with unrealistic expectations about their roles as students. Their thinking often resembles something like this:

```
   Instructor (producer)   
      ↓                  
  Information (product)  
      ↓                
 Student (consumer) 
```

In the model above, the student consumes information in the same way he or she purchases a new pair of shoes. But education works best when students see themselves as producers as indicated by the model below:

```
   Society (consumer)   
      ↑                  
 Student (producer/product)  
      ↓                  
   Instructor (quality control) 
```

In this model, the student shares equal responsibility for his or her education. In college composition courses, the instructor cannot produce your writing —you do! Your instructor only serves as your guide throughout the process. Then, during the course and at the end of the term, it’s the instructor’s responsibility to express how well you did in the form of a grade. If you follow assignments with care, produce quality material, meet deadlines and adhere to other course policies, you should receive a respectable grade. But education is about more than accumulating good grades; it’s about improving society as a whole.

Ultimately, when students realize their potential as producers rather than as passive consumers, the whole society benefits. No business or organization wants a non-productive individual on staff. Who would hire a song writer who does not write songs?
On the other hand, those students who have gained the confidence and skills to produce quality work during rapidly changing circumstances will likely make any organization or business more successful. The more successful organizations and businesses become, the more successful society becomes.

So as you work through your composition courses, remember the goal is for you to produce papers that you can point to with pride as quality work. By accepting the role—and responsibilities—of being a producer in the educational process, you will have gone a long way toward making college a more rewarding experience.

**What can I expect from my composition instructor?**

Key to your success in English 105 and 106 (and all college classes, for that matter) is interacting in a positive way with your instructor. Begin this process by finding out your instructor’s expectations. A good place to start is by reading the course syllabus with care. Below are typical features of a composition course syllabus:

- behavioral expectations
- grading policies
- attendance expectations
- disability statement
- contact information
- textbook information
- course schedule
- office hours

If you have trouble understanding any of the instructor’s policies (e.g., you don’t understand how the instructor grades papers), please consult with your instructor outside of class, early in the term. In most cases, you will be able to resolve any potential misunderstanding during this meeting, and you will develop a greater rapport with your instructor as well.

**How should I contact my instructor?**

Students and instructors typically communicate outside of class through one of three channels:

- face-to-face communications between the student and instructor
- email communications
- telephone communications

**Face-to-Face Communications**

If you need to communicate with your instructor for any length of time beyond a minute or two, please do not email or phone your concerns to your instructor. Instead, visit your instructor during office hours or arrange to talk with your instructor before or after class. Depending on the nature of the concern, your instructor may set up additional
conferences with you to discuss the issue. The tips below will help you achieve a successful conference:

- If your conference has been scheduled, arrive on time with a positive attitude. A good start to any conference would be to thank your instructor for taking time to help you with your class work.

- Express your concerns patiently and clearly, allowing your instructor to respond without interruptions. Although you may become frustrated, focus on cooperating with your instructor to solve the problem. She or he may be as frustrated as you are, but you share the desire for a positive outcome. Work together and stay encouraged.

- When the conference ends, thank your instructor for his or her advice and time. Then take time to reflect on the meeting. You may want to document what was discussed. This will help you remember the important points so that future problems may be avoided.

**Email Communications**

Email messages have become a popular method of communication between students and instructors. Sometimes, though, a more thoughtful and carefully-worded message would make the message content more effective. The advice below should help make your emails more successful:

- **Check course documents to see if you already have the information before sending a message.** In traditional face-to-face classes, emailing works best when you seek an answer to a simple question not apparent in your syllabus, assignment sheet, or class notes. Before emailing your query to your instructor, then, please refer to these documents to see if you can answer the question yourself. Doing so will save time for all involved.

- **Allow adequate time for a response.** Although most instructors are diligent about checking their email, their priorities may differ from your priorities. Also, remember that instructors are not in their offices, nor are they in front of their computers, 24 hours a day. If you send an email at 2 a.m. or during weekends, you can expect some delay in the response.

- **Compose the message with care.** The quality of the message content creates an impression of you as a communicator. Most instructors will expect the same composition standards in your emails as they do in your papers. Poorly written emails containing texting abbreviations, sentence fragments, misspellings, all letters in lower case or upper case, etc. may not garner a response, or you may be asked to revise the email. At the very least, proofread.
• **Sending an email does not automatically excuse you from coursework.** “Did you get my email?” is a common question asked by many students who miss class or submit late work. When an instructor answers “Yes,” do not assume that you are excused from your instructor’s syllabus policies and procedures. When an instructor answers “No” or “I cannot recall” do not assume it is the instructor’s fault for not addressing your excuse for absence or late work. Instead, follow the advice below.

• **Politely communicate a request for a response, if one is needed.** Sometimes you may not need your instructor to respond, such as when you send an email informing your instructor that you are going to be unavoidably late to class. Never assume, though, that your instructor will reply to each and every email he or she receives. If you wish the instructor to acknowledge your email, you **must** indicate this to the instructor, in a polite manner, with a closing note asking for a response:

  
  Dear Professor,
  I am ill and will not be able to attend our 105 class tomorrow at 10:10. I will get notes from one of my classmates to cover the material I missed. Please let me know that you received this email. Thank you.

  --George Smiley, student

• **Expect that your email message may be saved as documentation.** Sometimes email becomes a channel to vent complaints about grades, instructor attitudes, other students, etc. Remember that the same rules governing classroom behavior as outlined in the DMACC Student Manual also apply to email. In college—and on the job—**never send an email written in frustration.** Such emails provide instructors, employers, and authorities a permanent record of your behavior. If you feel angry or frustrated, wait 24 hours—or more—before sending an email message, and revise the message until the tone and content are appropriate.

**Telephone Communications**
Whenever possible, speak to your instructor face-to-face before or after class or during a scheduled office hour. If there is no other option, however, follow these guidelines when communicating by telephone:

  If your instructor answers the phone:
  1. Name the person you are calling if the instructor does not identify himself or herself.
  2. Identify yourself and the reason for calling.
  3. Allow your instructor to respond when appropriate.
  4. Enunciate clearly.
If you need to leave voice mail:
   1. Avoid rushing the voice mail.
   2. Enunciate clearly.
   3. Provide a complete message including
      • Your name.
      • Telephone number.
      • Time and date of your call.
      • Reason for the call.

As with email, if you expect a response, please politely request one. Also, there may be unanticipated delays waiting for a response. Please avoid multiple phone calls to the same instructor if you experience a delay. Your instructor will get back to you when time permits.

What should my instructor expect of me?

No other course at the first-year level is likely to develop discipline more than a composition course. Simply put: writing is work. Typically, students should expect to put more time outside of class into a college composition course than any class they experienced in high school or their other first-year college courses. To meet your instructor’s expectations for class preparedness, a good rule of thumb is to spend at least one hour outside of class (reading/analyzing assigned material, researching, etc.) for every hour your class meets per week. Expect also to increase your workload outside class time when planning/drafting/revising/editing major papers.

Also, when taking a composition course try to avoid these bad habits:

• missing class
• coming late to class
• playing video games, searching Facebook, or visiting websites in a computerized classroom instead of writing
• texting during class
• carrying on side conversations during class
• studying for a test in another course during class
• sleeping during class

By eliminating bad habits and by following your instructor’s classroom expectations listed in the course syllabus, you can make your learning experience a positive one. Generally, most instructors will respond positively to good habits listed below (Utah State; adapted in Bittner and Ranch 57-58, and re-adapted, with the publisher’s permission, here):

• Attend class regularly. You lose when you skip a class. If you must miss a class, arrange for another student to keep notes for you (don’t expect professors to give you theirs, even if you send a request via email).
• **Arrive on time and be attentive in class.** Late arrivals are a distraction to the entire class. If you must be late, find the nearest convenient seat and quickly and quietly sit down. Then listen actively by taking good notes.

• **Submit assignments on time.** Late assignments suggest a lack of enthusiasm and commitment, and your instructor will likely penalize your grade. (Remember that late assignments on the job are rarely tolerated by most employers.) Make sure that you understand, and adhere to, the course policies regarding deadlines and penalties for late work as outlined in the course syllabus.

• **Accept responsibility.** Don’t make excuses; learn from your mistakes instead of simply defending them. Avoid distracting your classmates by complaining about the instructor or an assignment during class time.

• **Submit high quality work in both content and form.** Always try to do your best work. The process of completing an assignment may require an extended time commitment from you, more so if research is involved. Learn to get started on papers early and revise them up to the due date. Avoid trying to generate papers the night before they’re due.

• **Ask questions relevant to the course material.** By asking relevant questions, you show your instructor that you are engaged in the course. On the other hand, if you ask questions like, “Can I leave early?” or “Can we have class outside?” or “Are we doing anything important today?” you are not likely to gain your instructor’s respect and admiration.

• **Visit your instructor during office hours.** At least once during the semester, drop by your instructor’s office to ask a relevant question or to inquire about your general progress in the course. Your instructor can get to know you a little bit so you’ll become more than “a face in the crowd.”

• **Avoid Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating in which a student fails to give proper credit for written work that belongs to someone else. It involves trying to pass off the work of others as one’s own. Extensive revision of your work by someone else can also be considered plagiarism. Students falsely assume that they will not be caught; however, instructors are very adept at identifying work that has been incorrectly documented or “borrowed” from another source without proper citation. Your instructor may also choose to use a plagiarism detection service, such
as Turnitin.com, or may use an online search tool, like Google, to
double-check passages you have submitted as your own work.
For more information and rules governing Academic Dishonesty,
please consult a good handbook and your DMACC Student Manual.
You may also want to visit the DMACC Academic Integrity website at
https://go.dmacc.edu/learntocite/Pages/welcome.aspx.

**Will my papers be graded objectively?**

Students sometimes assume that college instructors are biased negatively towards them as people, and this is what causes low grades. Your grade, however, is determined by the quality of the work you produce, not simply because an instructor “likes” or “dislikes” you.

Other students are troubled by the lack of a single “right answer” in composition and thus see grades as being arbitrary—as compared to a course like mathematics where getting the “right answer” counts. True, there are not as many “right answers” in composition as in other disciplines because there can be many ways to write a paper successfully.

But getting the “right answer” does not translate into “objective” evaluation. In fact, your performance in college is judged subjectively by instructors: their curricular choices are subject to both the kind of training they received in their field of study and to their approach to teaching college students. Some math instructors, for example, give partial credit for wrong answers on exams and/or “curve” final grades. Moreover, subjective evaluations are also prevalent in the workplace—from daily assessments to the infamous “six-month evaluations” where employees are rated both by their performance and by their ability to work with others.

Your composition instructor is trained to recognize those patterns and strategies in writing that work best for future coursework and on the job. Your grades, then, are based on how well you develop such patterns and strategies and apply them appropriately in your papers and other coursework. Also remember that your instructor applies the same grading standards to your classmates’ performance. Overall, you should be confident that your performance is measured accurately and fairly.
Overview of English 105 and English 106

This segment describes approaches used by most instructors in both English 105 and English 106. Typical approaches common to both composition courses—grading papers, assigning final grades, and implementing the DMACC course assessment project—will be discussed below. More information about each course can be found in the “105 Overview” and “106 Overview” following this segment.

Grading Papers

This section describes how in general how instructors typically assign paper grades. For more specific information or criteria about assigning grades, please refer to your instructor’s syllabus.

Evaluation

Your ability to produce quality work in composition will be observed and evaluated in much the same way athletic coaches observe and evaluate a student athlete’s progress by offering advice about how to improve a specific athletic move or strategy.

As your writing coach, your instructor will provide you with helpful comments about your writing. For instance, your instructor may point to places where more content development is needed, or where a better organizational pattern would strengthen the paper’s effectiveness. Also like an athletic coach who “preaches the fundamentals,” your instructor will point out errors in grammar and punctuation and may refer you to the “Common Composition Error” section of The Blue Book or other handbook to promote your development as an effective writer.

Your instructor’s comments, then, should not be interpreted as idle criticism, having no consequence. On the contrary, the commentary is designed to motivate you to think about your writing process so that revision of your papers will lead to improved style and deeper insights in future work.

Revision

Revising papers is critical to the recursive process of writing. Depending upon your instructor’s approach to teaching the writing process, this revision may involve one or more of these strategies:

- composing multiple whole drafts leading to a final product,
- rethinking and rewriting major sections of a paper, following your instructor’s advice, or
- making your own changes to papers as you draft them.
In one way or another, then, **how well you learn to revise papers will affect your grade.** Most often, if you apply appropriate revision techniques to papers, the quality of your writing will improve.

**Grading Rubrics—How to Check Your Grade**

To help you understand assigned grades, many instructors include a grading *rubric* in their syllabi, or they may include one with assignments. A *rubric* is defined as a summary of the criteria used to make a judgment. When you do not understand why you received a certain grade for a particular paper, you should follow these three steps before consulting with your instructor about your grade:

1. Check your assignment sheet to make sure you fulfilled all of the criteria for the paper.
2. Re-read all of the instructor comments on your paper.
3. Review your instructor’s grading rubric (if available).

Please refer to the sample grading rubrics in the “105 Overview” (p. 16) and/or “106 Overview” (p. 22) for a general idea of how an instructor might evaluate your papers and assign a grade.

**Determining Course Grades**

Your course grade in composition reflects your instructor’s assessment of your progress in the course: how well you’ve achieved the course competencies and adhered to course policies. The instructor may use any evidence—attendance, class discussions, in-class computer exercises, quiz scores, *etc.*—that will help evaluate your progress, but your ability to produce quality work on major paper assignments is often the primary basis for your course grade.

Feel free to ask your instructor—politely, of course—about your grade or how grades are calculated. Your instructor may not know you have questions unless you share them, and if you have questions, it is likely other students do as well.

**Questioning Course Grades**

In the vast majority of cases, your course grade has been determined honestly and fairly by your composition instructor. Because any time during the semester, you may ask your instructor about your standing or progress in English 105 or 106, your course grade should come as no surprise to you at the semester’s end. If you wish to improve your grade as the semester develops, please follow this advice:

- Attend all classes, and arrive at class on time.
- Make appointments with your instructor outside of class to go over rough drafts (Hint: Try to meet during your instructor’s office hours).
- Make writing the issue: For example, ask your instructor where she or he thinks your writing is weak, and strive to correct those weak areas.
At the same time, when questioning the course grade, please *avoid these bad habits*:

- Do not wait until the semester’s end to begin asking questions about your course grade. Doing so makes the grade the issue, not your writing.
- Avoid defending the indefensible: For example, avoid arguing that papers submitted late should not be penalized when this policy is in the syllabus.
- Do not make the grade the issue: For example, do not state that you need a certain grade to get credit for a composition course at a four-year school, or that you need a certain grade to please your parents who are paying for your education, *etc.*

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**Overview of English 105/Composition I**

Because instructors employ a variety of successful approaches to teaching English 105, this section will focus on those experiences and ideas common to Composition I. Be sure to read your instructor’s syllabus carefully to preview your course and ask questions as they occur. The following features of English 105 are covered in this section:

- ENG 105 Scope
- Course Competencies
- ENG 105 Assignments
- ENG 105 Sample Grading Rubric

**ENG 105 Scope**

English 105/Composition I is your introduction to composition at the college level. In this course, you will learn the very important relationship between an author’s purpose in a written piece and readers’ expectations. By reading the work of professional writers, you will learn how to “read like a writer” to see how writers fulfill or challenge reader expectations. Then you will apply what you’ve learned to your own writing.

The course may begin with students writing about their own observations and experiences. At some point in the course, students typically analyze and write about the work of other authors. Students will also be expected to include research in one or more papers using Modern Language Association (MLA) format for documentation.

**Course Competencies**

A “competency” is defined as a required course component. Students sometimes use these competencies as a checklist to chart their strengths and weaknesses in English 105. As the course develops, the terminology used in these competencies should become clear to you. If you have trouble understanding any of the terms or concepts listed below, please consult with your instructor.
ENGLISH 105/COMPOSITION I

Description
Composition I introduces students to the college-level writing process through the construction and revision of a series of expository and persuasive essays. Students may also produce other writing appropriate to the academic and working world. Through exposure to a variety of college-level readings, the students will build critical reading skills, and students will be expected to respond to assigned readings in a variety of ways. The course introduces library and computer-based research strategies. Students will write and revise at least 4 essays and produce a minimum of 20 pages.

Course Competencies

1. Generate writing as an active process, using planning, drafting, revising, and editing
   1. Explore invention activities, such as brainstorming, listing, word-mapping, reading, freewriting, discussing, and journal writing
   2. Use planning and drafting techniques, such as outlining and freewriting
   3. Consider audience, purpose, and context
   4. Revise for clarity, coherence, and conciseness
   5. Use technology as appropriate given the task, assignment, and setting

2. Evaluate strategies and approaches for organizing content
   1. Write well-structured introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs
   2. Organize essays using thesis statements and topic sentences
   3. Use paragraphs as an organizational method
   4. Incorporate effective transitional devices
   5. Integrate relevant, credible supporting details and evidence from source materials
   6. Incorporate quotations from source material

3. Examine college-level reading skills as an active part of the writing process
   1. Identify various genres of expository writing, including narrative, essay, and article
   2. Develop vocabulary, using relevant reference resources
   3. Examine various rhetorical and organizational methods
   4. Use effective reading techniques such as rereading, annotating, paraphrasing, and summarizing
   5. Analyze the content, expression, and context of verbal and/or visual texts

4. Synthesize research resources appropriate to the task and context
   1. Develop researching skills to locate credible sources, which may include interviews, observations, surveys, DMACC library resources, library databases, and other web resources
   2. Distinguish between credible and unreliable print or electronic sources
   3. Integrate research into writing when appropriate
   4. Acknowledge ownership of ideas when using source information

5. Integrate standard college-level documentation practices
   1. Understand definitions and consequences of plagiarism
      1. Understand definitions and consequences of plagiarism
      2. Identify reasons for documentation
      3. Distinguish between personal ideas and outside sources
4. Develop summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting skills using primary and secondary sources
5. Integrate sources effectively within the given context
6. Document sources in MLA or APA formatting style
6. Adapt to the rules of Standard English grammar appropriate to context
1. Use standard rules of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling
2. Construct syntactically sound sentences using varied, appropriate vocabulary

**ENG 105 Assignments**

You can expect to write four to eight papers in English 105. Please refer to the end of this section for a few sample English 105 paper assignments.

Paper assignments typically state clearly the purpose and goals of each assignment. **If you have trouble understanding any aspect of an assignment, please consult with your instructor, preferably early in the writing process.**

The class work in English 105 may also include shorter writing exercises that help generate ideas or emphasize a concept or skill central to the production of a paper. You may also expect to work in groups or on the computer to enhance your understanding and skill related to each topic.

**Sample ENG 105 Assignments**

The following two samples reflect typical design of assignments in English 105. Because there are innumerable ways to achieve course competencies, your instructor’s assignments may differ from those presented here. It is important, then, that you read your instructor’s assignment sheets very carefully so that you understand the purpose and goals of the assignment.

*(Sample 1)*

**Writing Assignment 1: Remembering Events**

**First Draft Due: September 14**

**Final Due Date: September 18**

"Remembering events" is another name given to the genre of autobiographical narrative. Writing autobiographical narrative allows practice in narrating a story, setting up cause and effect relationships, and using various narrative and descriptive strategies to create an essay with autobiographical significance: an essay that gives insight into the author's life.

You may choose any of the following three options as a prompt for this essay.

**Option 1:** "Write an essay about a significant event in your life. Choose an event that will be engaging for readers and will at the same time tell them something about you. Tell your story dramatically and vividly, giving a clear indication of its autobiographical significance." (*St. Martin’s Guide to Writing*, Chapter 2).
Option 2: Choose a photograph that is important to you and tell the story of the events which surround it. This should not be as much a story about taking a picture as it is about an event where a picture is taken. Focus on explaining why this event was important to capture on film, as this will give your essay the autobiographical significance it needs to be successful. Was this an event that people normally capture on film (a wedding, birthday, or a vacation)? Was it a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence? Who is in the picture? Who is left out? In other words, focus on what is missing from the picture as well as what the picture contains. Write this essay as if your audience does not have the photograph in front of him or her, and is not familiar with the event(s) you are describing. This means that you will have to provide adequate details in describing both the photograph and the events surrounding it.

Option 3: Write about a time where you identified yourself strongly as a member of a particular ethnic, cultural, religious, political, educational, or other group. Describe and reflect on the experience that caused you to make this identification. Was it a positive or negative experience? What consequences did it have for you then, and what consequences does it have for you now?

Specifics:

Essays must be 800-1000 words (approximately 4 typewritten pages) and must be word-processed or typed.

As you write and revise your essay, check to see that you are meeting all of the expectations stated in the prompt. Also pay close attention to the development of events in your essay: are you providing enough detail so that a reader who is unfamiliar with the events will be able to understand them?

In grading your essay, I will be considering the following criteria as the most important:

1) Story: Does this essay have a minimal story which contains conflict(s) and resolution(s)? Is this minimal story developed and sustained throughout the essay by the use of various narrative and descriptive strategies? In other words, I will be looking at what is being told as well as how it's being told.

2) Reflection and Insight: All essays have to measure up to the question of "So what?" Good essays will explain why the event was significant to them and make this significance apparent to others, so that the reader can take these insights away with them after reading the essay. This autobiographical significance is one of the features which distinguishes an autobiographical narrative from a simple chronology and is therefore crucial.

3) Descriptive Detail: I will be looking for essays with well-developed paragraphs that provide concrete details about the events which are being remembered. Good essays will make the remembered events "come alive" for the reader by providing specific details as well as providing the reader with the context he or she needs to understand the events and glean insight from them.

Writing any essay is a process. As part of this process, you will be reading and responding to drafts of your classmates' writing. The day for groupwork and in-class revision is September 16th. You must therefore bring a first draft of your essay along with 3 copies of it to class on September 14th. This revision is a crucial part of the writing process and will count toward your class participation grade and the grade you receive on this assignment. The due date for the final draft of the paper is September 18.
Summary Email

The Situation

Your friend, Tom Moore, is very intelligent, but when it comes to writing, he has difficulties organizing material for an audience. He has read a few of your papers and is impressed by your organizing skills—so much so, that he has been seeking your advice about what to do on a page. Although you are flattered and happy to answer Tom’s questions, you are becoming uncomfortable because it seems you are giving him the same advice over and over again.

At first you’re perplexed about what to do. However, when you flip through The St. Martin’s Guide to Writing, you discover that Chapter 13, “Cueing the Reader”, should help Tom solve most of his problems. You decide to help Tom by writing a summary of the main concepts contained in Chapter 13 and then emailing them to him so he can access them easily on his computer.

Your Assignment

Write an email summarizing key organizational principles in Chapter 13 in your own words. You know Tom tends to be impatient when it comes to English, so you’ll need to keep your summary short, no more than 500 words (about 2 pages). Consider the details below as you plan and draft your summary:

1. **Accuracy.** Be sure that you accurately convey the ideas in Chapter 13 in your own words. You may repeat some key terms, but on the whole, the material should reflect your own style.

2. **Scope.** Make sure to include all of the main ideas in Chapter 13 with special emphasis on those that are likely to help Tom the most.

3. **Brevity.** Because you only have 500 words to work with, try to get the most out of every word, phrase, and sentence.

4. **Usability.** Make sure to create a well-designed email attachment for Tom, using headings, bulleted or numbered lists, unified paragraphs, easy-to-read sentences, etc.

Also, be sure to tell Tom where you got your information. You can do so in a brief introduction of the email itself (the attachment, then, functions as the main body of the summary) so Tom understands how the summary will help him with the writing he must do for school. This documentation of the source won’t count as part of the 500-word limit.

When finished please send your email attachments to baross@dmacc.edu by the due date indicated on your syllabus.

Some Things I’ll Look for in Your Summary

- principles stated in your own words, in a way Tom will understand and remember
- easy-to-follow organization so that Tom assimilates the information readily
- clear, concise sentences with a high density of information; active verbs
- coherence from one sentence to the next (e.g., good use of transitions)
**ENG 105 Sample Grading Rubric**

Below is an example of a grading rubric for English 105. This example illustrates the criteria used in a typical rubric, and should not be confused with the grading criteria for your course. Please refer to your instructor’s syllabus for specific information about how your grade will be determined.

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<td><strong>Excellent</strong></td>
<td>An A paper contains an identifiable and interesting thesis, an awareness of its audience, a cohesive organizing strategy, unified paragraphs, generalizations supported adequately with details, evidence, anecdotes, statistics, etc. Also, the paper exhibits clear and lively expression, a strong conclusion and few, if any, grammatical errors. In short, the paper displays independent thought as well as a mastery of conventions. ‘A’ papers typically reflect a student’s ability to exceed assignment goals and/or reader expectations.</td>
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<td>A C paper meets the requirements of the assignment and demonstrates competence, but it may include one or more general problems such as a forced or incomplete organizing strategy, an unclear thesis or theme, a confusion over the audience, an inconsistent use of detail or support, a lack of transitions between ideas, scenes or images, a vague or nonexistent conclusion. In general, the writer has addressed some needs of readers, but the paper would benefit from more careful thinking and/or revision and editing.</td>
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<td><strong>Below Average</strong></td>
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<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fail</strong></td>
<td>An F paper is virtually unreadable because it lacks focus, sufficient content, does not meet the requirements of the assignment, and often contains far too many grammatical errors.</td>
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Overview of English 106/Composition II

Because instructors employ a variety of successful approaches to teaching English 106, this section will focus on those experiences and ideas common to Composition II. Be sure to read your instructor’s syllabus carefully to more fully preview your course and ask questions as they occur. The following features of English 106 are covered in this section:

- ENG 106 Scope
- Course Competencies
- ENG 106 Assignments
- ENG 106 Sample Grading Rubric

ENG 106 Scope

English 106/Composition II is the second course in the composition sequence at DMACC. In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of informative and persuasive rhetoric. By reading the work of professional writers, you will learn how to apply these fundamentals to your own writing.

The course usually begins by summarizing the persuasive work of other authors or historical documents. Later in the course, students will analyze an author’s use of persuasion to discover how use of rhetorical strategies promotes the author’s purpose in terms of his or her audience. Students will also be expected to write one or more persuasive papers, which incorporate primary and secondary source material and use either Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) format for documentation.

Course Competencies

A “competency” is defined as required course component. Students sometimes use these competencies as a checklist to chart their strengths and weaknesses in English 106. As the course develops, the terminology used in these competencies should become clear to you. If you have trouble understanding any of the terms or concepts listed below, please consult with your instructor.

English 106/Composition II

Description
Composition II is a continuation of Composition I. Students will analyze, synthesize, and evaluate texts. Effective academic research is also emphasized. Assignments may include expository and persuasive writing appropriate to academic and professional contexts. Students will write and revise three or more essays, including a research-based argument, and produce a minimum of 20 pages of prose. Academic integrity is a key expectation of this course.
Course Competencies

1. Apply college-level reading skills to academic and professional texts
   1. Read a variety of academic and professional texts, primarily non-fiction
   2. Develop vocabulary
   3. Identify language nuances, such as denotation, connotation, and figurative language
   4. Determine a text’s audience, purpose, thesis, and context
   5. Restate texts by summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting

2. Analyze rhetorical strategies found in academic and professional texts
   1. Determine how ideas, structures, or other textual features influence interpretation, including rhetorical situations and social, cultural, and historical contexts
   2. Examine how multiple perspectives can operate at the same time
   3. Distinguish between types of evidence, such as primary, secondary, quantitative, and qualitative
   4. Determine logical fallacies, bias, slanted language, discriminatory language, and propaganda

3. Integrate sources to support research-based projects
   1. Determine research objectives and schedule
   2. Locate primary and secondary sources via library databases, catalogs, Internet, and other resources
   3. Analyze the relevance and credibility of sources
   4. Illustrate claims using research sources

4. Argue in response to continuing dialogues within and beyond academic disciplines
   1. Recognize various points-of-view
   2. Integrate audience-based persuasion techniques
   3. Evaluate multi-cultural, social or global perspectives for diverse audiences
   4. Synthesize ideas from multiple sources to reframe in new contexts

5. Evaluate individual writing processes to produce college-level essays and projects
   1. Generate early drafting and revision strategies, including conference, workshop, or individual and peer feedback
   2. Compose clear, concise prose
   3. Construct syntactically sound sentences using varied, appropriate vocabulary
   4. Use standard rules of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling

6. Integrate standard college-level documentation practices
   1. Understand definitions and consequences of plagiarism
   2. Identify reasons for documentation
   3. Distinguish between personal ideas and outside sources
   4. Integrate sources effectively within the given context
   5. Document sources using MLA or APA style
**ENG 106 Assignments**

You can expect to write four to eight papers in English 106. Please refer to the end of this section for a few sample English 106 paper assignments.

Papers assignments typically state clearly the purpose and goals of each assignment. **If you have trouble understanding any aspect of an assignment, please consult with your instructor, preferably early in the writing process.**

The class work in English 106 may also include shorter writing exercises that help generate ideas or emphasize a concept or skill central to the production of a more substantial paper. You may also expect to work in groups or on the computer to enhance your understanding and skill related to each topic.

**Sample ENG 106 Assignments**

The following two samples reflect typical design of assignments and a few of the topics studied in English 106. Because there are innumerable ways to achieve course competencies, your instructor’s assignments may differ from those presented here. It is important, then, that you read your instructor’s assignment sheets very carefully so that you understand the purpose and goals of the assignment.

**(Sample 1)**

**Analyzing Advertising (Min. 500 wds.)**

For the last assignment, you analyzed a text to see how well an author’s techniques fulfilled his or her purpose. For this assignment, you are to analyze a full-page advertisement to see how both verbal and visual techniques help to sell the product or service promoted by the ad.

**Choosing an Advertisement**

By following the steps below, you should be able to choose an ad that will fulfill the goals of this assignment.

Step 1. Your first task is to choose a magazine that holds some interest for you. It can be a magazine that you subscribe to or one that you refer to on a regular basis.

Step 2. Determine the magazine’s demographics—for whom does the magazine seem to be designed? You can do this by examining the kinds of articles or stories included in the magazine and by scrutinizing the ads and the kinds of products they promote. Then ask what type of person would read these kinds of articles and who would buy these kinds of products. This should help you determine the magazine’s target audience.

Step 3. Based on this informal demographic analysis, choose a representative full-page ad from the magazine.

Step 4. Be sure to integrate this demographic analysis into the introduction of your paper (Hint: This should help you form your analytical statement.)
Planning and Drafting
Using your textbook and class discussions as a guide, analyze the advertisement, concentrating on 2-4 techniques or appeals (visual or verbal) that you think will have the greatest impact on readers. As in the previous assignment, focus upon what you think the effect of each technique will be on viewers. Then evaluate the overall advertisement in terms of its target audience:

- Will the target audience pay little attention to the ad?
- Might the target audience notice the ad, but probably not purchase the product?
- Is the ad likely to produce greater sales for the product or service?

By answering questions like these, you should be able to derive a conclusion that details your final judgment of the ad’s potential.

Evaluation Criteria
- introductory analysis and identification of the target audience are sound
- analysis of techniques/appeals is thoughtful and clear
- final consideration of the ad’s success or failure is reasonable and derived from the analytical points discussed in the paper
- material is organized effectively for the analysis
- material is largely free from punctuation and grammatical errors

(Sample 2)
Paper #5—Dialectical Analysis (Min. 1000 wds.)

Assignment
For this assignment, you are to defend a position on a controversial issue or situation in today’s society by debating the pros and cons of the issue or situation. Before writing the paper, it is important to establish your position on the issue; however, because your readers are those opposed to your position, very careful consideration of their views should guide your argument. In fact, most—if not all—starting points for arguments concerning the issue should be derived from your knowledge of the opposing view. Finally, because of the limitations of space and time, you should choose an issue that will allow you to master the material of the argument and arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

Research
You will be required to use at least three secondary sources and at least one primary source in your paper following the Modern Language Association (MLA) format for documentation. Any variation from this format could seriously affect your grade. Also, all research must be photocopied and attached to your paper so that source material can be checked in terms of the MLA format. Failure to incorporate source material into your paper will result in an automatic failing grade. At the same time an over-reliance on source material—such that it overshadows your own thinking—will result in a ‘D’ paper.
Planning and Drafting
The following steps should help you outline the major sections of your paper:

1. Establish your position by writing down your thesis.

2. List five counter-claims that you’re sure your audience will assert.

3. Decide where your audience’s position is strong and where it is weak.

4. Highlight your opposition’s best two or three counter-claims.

5. Develop at least three counterarguments for each one of the three counter-claims.

6. Working section by section (one section per counter-claim), write a down-draft of the paper, perhaps incorporating ideas about an introduction and a conclusion.

7. Research the issue, using the source material to provide important background information, help support your position, and/or refute your opponent’s position. Do not research the issue before thinking it through on your own.

8. Re-think and revise your original sketch, strengthening your arguments by adding points when appropriate, or by incorporating necessary support from primary and secondary sources or from your own experience.

9. Arrive at a conclusion in which you 1) reaffirm common ground with your readers, or 2) suggest a resolution to the controversy, or 3) combine these strategies with a persuasive summary of your position. Avoid merely summarizing points, however.

10. Proofread carefully for errors, paragraph unity, use of transitions, wordy or too regular expression, spelling, etc.

Evaluation Criteria
- Position is clearly established
- Opposing points of view are smoothly incorporated into the text
- Expression and tone are clear and appropriate
- Organizing strategy is easy to follow and appropriate for the issue
- Support for claims is adequate
- Secondary sources are used effectively and do not dominate the text or your thinking
- MLA format is used and is clear
- Material reflects careful editing
Below is an example of a grading rubric for English 106. This example illustrates the criteria used in a typical rubric, and should not be confused with the grading criteria for your course. Please refer to your instructor’s syllabus for specific information about how your grade will be determined.

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Common Composition Errors

The following section lists many of the most common student errors made in composition courses. This is NOT an exhaustive list of all the errors writers sometimes make when composing; it is merely a starting point and should not be expected to take the place of a reputable handbook. For this reason, you should keep two key points in mind when using this list:

- Because this is not an exhaustive list of all student errors, your instructor may mark errors that do not appear in this section. When this happens, take care to note them and refer to a handbook for further instruction.

- As you review the material which follows, remember the error advice is limited. You may need to refer to a handbook or dictionary to make thorough corrections and improvements in your writing.

You will find this list useful because the error notations will help you identify errors more quickly in your paper (see the sample below). The shorthand notations will also help you identify error patterns which can be discussed more easily with other DMACC students, tutors, and instructors.

Error Notation Sample

When my brother was sued for defecation of character, we all had to go down to the courthouse we didn’t realize we where in for a really long crappy afternoon.

1A WW
1C USG
1B WC
2D RO
1. Language Problems

Mark Twain once wrote in a letter to a friend:

_The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it’s the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning._
- Letter to George Bainton, 10/15/1888 (“Lightning”).

In other words, good writers take care to choose exactly the right word and avoid wrong or approximate word choices. Three main categories of word choice problems are: errors of _denotation_ (1A WW), errors of _connotation_ (1B WC); and errors of _usage_ (1C USG). By reading and referring to the list below, you should begin to develop an “ear” for language, resulting in more confidence when writing, speaking, and listening.

### 1A. WW  Wrong Word Errors (Denotation)

You probably have had a friend who occasionally sings the wrong lyrics to some of your favorite songs, and you probably either winced in a mix of annoyance and amusement or corrected your friend. In much the same way, if you don’t use the correct word in your writing, you will annoy readers by confusing them or distracting them while reading. Using the wrong word also calls into question your credibility and competence. Below are examples of errors in denotation—also known as wrong word errors (WW)—and a short list of some of the more commonly misused words in composition classes.

**Error:** Is she taller _then_ me? (than)

**Error:** I’m _defiantly_ going to take a vacation this year. (definitely)

**Error:** Werewolves _were_ a problem wherever they went. (were)

**Error:** Because I took my geology course _for granite_, I got a ‘D’ on the final. (for granted)

**Error:** I tried to _infer_ that Benji was a bum. (imply)

### 1B. WC  Awkward Word Choice (Connotation)

Would you use the same kind of language with police officers as you would with your friends? Unless a police officer is a friend, you probably wouldn’t. Understanding that words have effects beyond their dictionary definitions is called _connotation_. Like using curse words in front of a trial judge during a legal proceeding, these errors result from a writer (or speaker)
misgauging the context of the communication, resulting in vague, awkward, or inappropriate language choices. Listed below are some of the more common awkward word choice problems found in writing.

**Ambiguous**  
Jane and Ted were entertaining guests.  
*Corrected*  
Jane and Ted hosted the party.

**Vague**  
Milking cows by hand is a thing not practiced by modern dairy farmers.  
*Corrected*  
Milking cows by hand is rarely practiced by modern dairy farmers.

**Inappropriate**  
The King of England treated the colonists like crap.  
*Corrected*  
The King of England treated the colonists poorly.

### 1C. Usg  
Usage

Words that are misused or do not conform to standards of formal communication are called *usage errors*. Commonly confused words (such as *less* and *fewer*), use of slang (such as use of *really* as an intensifier), and nonstandard English constructions (such as *theirselves*) reflect some of the errors in this category.

| Confused Word | Less people in line would be nice. |
| Corrected | Fewer people in line would be nice. |

| Slang | I was, *like, really* nervous before the interview. |
| Corrected | I was very nervous before the interview. |

| Nonstandard | In today’s *doggie-dog* world, a person must take care of *theirselves*. |
| Corrected | In today’s *dog-eat-dog* world, a person must take care of him or herself. |

One of the most common usage errors encountered in composition courses is the nonstandard use of the word “you.” Be sure to use the word *you* only when addressing the reader directly. Do not use the word *you* as an indefinite synonym for *one* or *anyone*.

| Error | You could feel the tension in the room. |
| Corrected | Anyone who was there could feel the tension in the room. |

| Error | You really have to know what you’re doing when scuba-diving. |
| Corrected | One really has to know what one is doing when scuba-diving. |
A serious failing among some students is not understanding sentence boundaries, or complete sentences. The three most common errors in this category are the sentence fragment (SF), the comma splice (CS), and the run-on sentence (RO).

2A. SF  Sentence Fragments

A sentence is defined as a group of words containing a subject, a verb, and conveying a complete thought. When one or more of these elements are missing from a word group, a sentence fragment occurs, a very serious error in writing.

**Clause Fragment**  We went outside.  *Because the day was nice.*
**Corrected**  Because the day was nice, we went outside.

**Verbal Fragment**  Bill and Sandy had fun.  *Swimming through the rolling waves.*
**Corrected**  Bill and Sandy had fun.  Swimming through the rolling waves, they laughed and high-fived each other in the surf.

**Listing Fragment**  The cars in the parking lot were classics.  *Fords, Chevrolets, and Buicks.*
**Corrected**  Fords, Chevrolets, and Buicks were the classic 1960s cars on display in the parking lot.

2B. CS  Comma Splice

Consecutive independent clauses joined only by commas are known as comma splices or comma faults. Below is an example of this error and the various ways it can be corrected.

**Error**  We ran around the yard looking for the mouse, unfortunately he slipped away.

**Corrected**  We ran around the yard looking for the mouse.  Unfortunately, he slipped away.

**Corrected**  We ran around the yard looking for the mouse, but unfortunately, he slipped away.

**Corrected**  We ran around the yard looking for the mouse; unfortunately, he slipped away.
2C. CJ-CS  Conjunctive Comma Splice

Comma splice errors often occur when adverbial conjunctions (such as therefore, as a result, consequently, however, etc.) are used to join independent clauses.

Error  We were very tired, consequently, we gave up the search.
Corrected  We were very tired; consequently, we gave up the search.

Error  At first he refused, however later that evening he changed his mind and agreed to buy the car.
Corrected  At first he refused; however, later that evening he changed his mind and agreed to buy the car.

2D. RO  Run-On Sentences

A close cousin of the comma splice error, a run-on or fused sentence, occurs when consecutive independent clauses lack any punctuation between them. This error should not be confused with a wordy sentence; just because a sentence seems overly long does not make it a run-on sentence.

Error  I put the tire in the shed it was warm there.
Corrected  I put the tire in the shed. It was warm there.

Error  The car sped off the cliff the driver jumped to safety.
Corrected  The car sped off the cliff; the driver jumped to safety.

3. Errors in Sentence Rhetoric

Errors in sentence grammar occur because the writer does not understand the rules governing sentence boundaries and the punctuation of clauses and phrases. Errors in sentence rhetoric have more to do with the effect of a sentence on readers; the sentence is difficult to understand by being vague, ambiguous, or both. Listed below are some of the more common ways sentences fail rhetorically.

3A. DM  Dangling Modifier

A dangling modifier occurs when two parts of a sentence don’t seem to match; the element being modified is confused with something else or nothing at all.

Error  After laughing with several of my friends, a white rabbit came into view.

Tip #2: Delete wordiness. Eliminate words that do not contribute additional support for your thesis/claim.
Corrected  After laughing with several of my friends, I saw a white rabbit.

Error  Being a health hazard, the school nurse suggested the school closings.
Corrected  Since most students were absent because of the virus, the school nurse suggested the school closings.

Error  Racked with guilt, it becomes obvious why divorce is so common.
Corrected  Many couples, racked with guilt, often end up in divorce court.

3B. MM  Misplaced Modifier

A misplaced modifier is not close to the word or phrase it is supposed to modify and can cause confusion.

Error  I found several videos of The Foo Fighters performing live in Jim’s closet.
Corrected  In Jim’s closet, I found several live performances of The Foo Fighters.

To increase the clarity of a sentence, place limiting modifiers such as even or only directly before the word or phrase they modify. Note the difference in these sentences:

Error  Even his mother and the paperboy were surprised.
Corrected  His mother and even the paperboy were surprised.

3C. //ism  Parallelism Error

When one or more elements in a sentence or a list violate a set pattern, the sentence is considered not parallel and is likely to confuse readers.

Error  Jimmy’s favorite activities were fishing, hunting, and to swim like a fish.
Corrected  Jimmy’s favorite activities were fishing, hunting, and swimming like a fish.

Error  Many people feel that winning respect is more important than money.
Corrected  Many people feel that winning respect is more important than making money.
3D. GS and GS/MW  Garbled Sentences and Missing Words

Sometimes a sentence may have multiple problems which will confound readers. Often, garbling results from trying to cram too many ideas into one sentence, as the examples below suggest.

Error  It is very difficult to see how the problem resulted from the actions of many people in the building at the time the event happened, showing the characters’ development in the movie.

Correction  Character development was revealed in the movie’s apartment building scene.

At other times, words may be left out of a sentence (MW) resulting in confusing or unintended meaning.

Error  I, fortunately, did go to jail.
Correction  I, fortunately, did not go to jail.

4. Pronoun Problems

One of the more common errors in student writing is the improper use of pronouns. By referring to the list of examples below and by using a handbook, you should be able to eliminate these errors from your writing in short order.

4A. Pro-F  Improper Pronoun Form

Most of these problems occur when the grammatical function of the pronoun is not clearly understood. By determining whether the pronoun is functioning as an object or a subject within a sentence, you should be able to determine the proper pronoun form.

Error  It’s up to you and I to solve the problem.  (object)
Corrected  It’s up to you and me to solve this problem.

Error  Me and him went to the gym.  (subject)
Corrected  He and I went to the gym.

Error  Who are you speaking to?  (object)
Corrected  To whom are you speaking?
4B. **Pro-Ref** Faulty Pronoun Reference

Pronouns need to agree in number and person with the words for which they stand or to which they refer—their **antecedents**. Remember that pronouns must agree with the function of their antecedents. (i.e., If an antecedent is singular like the word “dog”, then the pronoun referring to “dog” must also be singular as in “Every dog has its day.”) Also note that indefinite pronouns, such as *each, every, all, neither, none, everybody, and anyone*, often function as antecedents and almost always take the singular form, though they may “sound” plural.

**Error** Everyone had their coats on. *(singular antecedent)*

**Corrected** Everyone had his or her coat on.

**Error** Each bush had little nuts under them.

**Corrected** Each bush had little nuts under it.

**Error** The consequence was obvious to each member who attended the meeting. They had to go their own way.

**Corrected** The consequence was obvious to each member. Each had to go his or her own way.

Make certain the pronoun refers to its antecedent clearly. Pronoun references that are vague or ambiguous are sure to confuse readers.

**Error** When Billy swung the bat at the marble statue, it broke in two.

**Corrected** The bat broke in two when Billy swung it against the statue.

**Error** Throughout the course of a lifetime, a human being is likely to commit several serious errors. One’s ego, however, tends to block this from one’s memory.

**Corrected** Throughout the course of a lifetime, a human being is likely to commit several serious errors. One’s ego, however, tends to block these errors from one’s memory.

### 5. Verb Problems

In English, the verb carries the action of a sentence, and since almost every action carries new information, using the correct verb or verb form is a key to clarity. Listed below are some common ways verbs go wrong in a composition. Be sure to consult a handbook for more information about how to correct these problems.
5A. S/V  Subject/Verb Agreement

In a sentence, the verb must agree with its subject in person and number.

Error  The rocks we threw at the signpost was the best we could find.
Corrected  The rocks we threw at the signposts were the best we could find.

Error  A ball, a bat, and a glove is the required equipment.
Corrected  A ball, a bat, and a glove are the required equipment.

Error  There’s three basic ways to succeed.
Corrected  There are three basic ways to succeed.

5B. VB  Verb Form Error

Make sure to follow standard verb forms. If you have trouble in this category, remember all good dictionaries provide lists of both regular and irregular verb forms and their principal parts.

Error  Her imagination had ran away.
Corrected  Her imagination had run away.

Error  John didn’t like the work, but after a while, he got use to it.
Corrected  John didn’t like the work, but after a while, he got used to it.

Error  It’s a good policy to let ideas set awhile before implementing them.
Corrected  It’s a good policy to let ideas sit awhile before implementing them.

6. SP  Spelling Problems

Though you may view spelling errors as minor problems, readers often find them annoying because they have to stop and correct your spelling in their mind’s eye. Poor spelling also call into question your credibility and devalues what you are trying to convey. Finally remember that your word-processing program’s spellchecker will not catch all spelling errors (as seen in some of the examples below). Instead of solely relying on such programs, use a dictionary to help correct these errors. It might be helpful as well to keep a master list of words which you commonly misspell.

Error  My english course is tougher than my chemistry course.
Corrected  My English course is tougher than Chemistry 250.
Error  There was a miner delay.
Corrected  There was a minor delay.

Error  I have to much trouble with you too children!
Corrected  I have too much trouble with you two children!

Error  That textile coarse was too easy.
Corrected  That textile course was too easy.

Error  We were wonderfully accommodated at the hotel.
Corrected  We were wonderfully accommodated at the hotel.

7. **Punctuation Problems**

Punctuation problems within sentences might be viewed as being minor, but, as in the case of spelling problems, these errors call into question one’s credibility and often affect a sentence’s meaning.

**7A. R/NR  Restrictive vs. Non-Restrictive Elements**

Also known as essential and non-essential elements, these problems often occur within relative clauses. A non-restrictive or non-essential element is a word group that functions as parenthetical (extra) information to the intended meaning of the sentence and is often surrounded by commas. Conversely, a restrictive or essential element is crucial to the intended meaning of the sentence and commas are not present.

In the first sentence below, the placement of commas indicates all workers will receive extra pay, whereas the second sentence makes clear that only those working the graveyard shift will receive more money.

Error  All workers, who work the 11p.m. to 7 a.m. shift, will receive extra pay.
Corrected  All workers who work the 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift will receive extra pay.

In the example below, the first sentence is in error because the placement of commas indicates the student has only one brother when, in fact, the student has many brothers as indicated properly by the second sentence.

Error  My brother, who lives in Detroit, plays cards.
Corrected  My brother who lives in Detroit plays cards.
7B. No Com  Unnecessary Comma

Commas are misused when they interrupt closely related parts of a sentence such as a subject and its verb, a verb and its object, or a preposition and its object.

Error  My old tennis racquet, is broken.
Corrected  My old tennis racquet is broken.

Error  All of us swam like madmen, to the shore.
Corrected  All of us swam like madmen to the shore.

Error  After watching the movie, I fell into, a deep sleep.
Corrected  After watching the movie, I fell into a deep sleep.

7C. End Punct  Terminal Punctuation Errors

Punctuation at its end helps convey the logic and tone of a sentence. When end punctuation is used incorrectly, your reader is likely to become confused.

Error  He asked me what I thought?
Corrected  He asked me what I thought.

Error  “Where’s the beef,” asked the little old lady?
Corrected  “Where’s the beef?” asked the little old lady.

Error  What does it all mean.
Corrected  What does it all mean?

7D. Apos  Apostrophe errors

Perhaps the most common punctuation error in composition courses occurs when some confusion between possessives and plurals results in the omission or misplacement of apostrophes.

Error  Bob is in Bobs room where he belongs!
Corrected  Bob is in Bob’s room where he belongs!

Error  Its a lot of work, do’nt you think?
Corrected  It’s a lot of work, don’t you think?

Error  In todays world, the individual gets lost in the shuffle.
Corrected  In today’s world, the individual gets lost in the shuffle.
**7E. SC**  
**Faulty Semi-Colon Use**

A common misconception about the semi-colon is that it functions as “a big comma,” mistakenly used to create a longer pause than a comma provides. In most cases, however, it’s better to think of the semi-colon as “a little period,” used to connect closely related independent clauses.

**Error**  
Shelly thinks it’s pretty neat; whenever she gets paid extra.

**Corrected**  
Shelly thinks it’s pretty neat whenever she gets paid extra.

**Corrected**  
Whenever Shelly gets paid extra, she thinks it’s pretty neat.

**Corrected**  
Sometimes Shelly gets paid extra; she thinks it’s pretty neat.

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**8. Paragraph Problems**

Unquestionably, knowing how to compose unified and coherent paragraphs is a major key to succeeding in a composition course. Well-constructed paragraphs make your logic and ideas more accessible to readers. After sentences, paragraphs are the building blocks of writing.

This section will focus on errors common in constructing standard paragraphs. Because there are numerous ways to solve these problems, please consult a handbook to consider your options.

**8A. ¶unity?**  
**Paragraph Unity Problems**

Each paragraph in your papers needs to be unified; in other words, it needs to be focused on a central idea, image, or function to make sense to readers. When a paragraph lacks unity, readers will have difficulty understanding the point or purpose of the paragraph as exemplified below:

> I chose an advertisement that has several interesting designs in it.

Central to the success of this ad was the picture of ducks in the center of the ad. **My favorite duck is the mallard.** The ducks tend to grab the attention of duck hunters who form the magazine’s target audience. **The last time I went duck hunting, I bagged a greenhead.**
As you can see in the previous example, the student has mixed personal experience with ad analysis, the purpose of the assignment. How would you advise the student to correct his error? Remember, there is more than one answer to this question.

8B. **Unity/Top?** Paragraph Unity Problems — Weak Topic Sentence

Sometimes a paragraph “breaks down” in the middle as in the example above. At other times, a paragraph is guided by a weak topic sentence as in the example below:

Many modern women stay in shape and relieve stress through exercising at home. My mother is no exception. When she works out, she makes a lot of noise which makes it difficult to watch TV. On other days, dinner is either late or is insufficient for us kids because she’s dieting. Her workouts also interfere with important projects needed to be done around the house, especially on weekends.

The topic sentence within the paragraph above is weak because it conveys something positive about working out at home, whereas the rest of the paragraph conveys negative attitudes about this activity.

8C. **Trans?** Problems of Paragraph Coherence—Weak Transitions

A paragraph can be unified but still lack coherence. In other words, the paragraph may be unified on a central point or purpose, but logical links between sentences within paragraphs are weak, resulting in an inconsistent logical flow that forces the reader to work out logical relationships. Lack of transitions or cohesive devices between sentences within a paragraph can also create a “choppy” reading experience as illustrated below:

Transitional words phrases help writers connect ideas. These simple words and phrases act like highway signposts which point the reader in the right direction in a written piece. Transitional words and phrases have a few downsides. Used in every sentence, transitional words and phrases can make the writing appear mechanical or “stiff.” Using the same transitional word or phrase can make a writer’s ideas
Transitional words and phrases are sometimes indispensable, particularly when the writer wants to contrast two ideas or to alert the reader to any change in the logical flow of ideas. Though transitional words and phrases may not be used in every sentence, they are essential tools that help writers keep readers on track.

The circled Xs above indicate where transitions or cohesive devices are weak, making the logic of the paragraph difficult to follow (in this case, the writer employs an advantages/disadvantages pattern to establish logic). The example below shows what can be done with transitions to improve this paragraph:

Transitional words phrases help writers connect ideas. These simple words and phrases act like highway signposts which point the reader in the right direction in a written piece. Transitional words and phrases have a few downsides, however. Used in every sentence, transitional words and phrases can make the writing appear mechanical or “stiff.” Using the same transitional word or phrase can also make a writer’s ideas seem redundant. Nevertheless, transitional words and phrases are sometimes indispensable, particularly when the writer wants to contrast two ideas or to alert the reader to any change in the logical flow of ideas. On the whole, though transitional words and phrases may not be used in every sentence, they are essential tools that help writers keep readers on track.

For a more complete list of transitions and cohesive devices, please consult a handbook or dictionary.
8D. Trans?  Weak Transitions between Paragraphs

Sometimes links between ideas are not only weak within paragraphs, but also between paragraphs. When this problem occurs, most often either the reader will have difficulty following a paper’s main points, or the paper will seem like a list of ideas rather than a good piece of writing. Consider the following student’s response to Gore Vidal’s article “Drugs”:

\[\text{X} \quad \text{In the article “Drugs,” Gore Vidal talks about how fighting drugs has become a big business as pushing them. In the second paragraph Gore Vidal gives his own opinion. He believes that many drugs are bad for the majority, but nevertheless should be sold in a more sensible way.}\]

\[\text{X} \quad \text{Gore talks about how the United States was the first creation who believed every man has the right to do what he wishes, and in paragraph 6, he talks about how every man has the power to kill himself.}\]

\[\text{X} \quad \text{In the article “Drugs,” Gore talks about how alcohol has impacted this nation. He also talks about how the same thing is happening today, and how the government has learned nothing of our past attempts to control inebriating elements.}\]

\[\text{X} \quad \text{Gore talks about how the Mafia is selling drugs, and that current government policies will only increase the Mafia’s control of the drug trade. He also implies that the Mafia is linked to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics.}\]

As you can see, the student’s paper reads more like a list of ideas rather than a well-considered response to Vidal’s article. Even though each paragraph is unified and coherent, the logical links between paragraphs are very weak and annoyingly repetitious so that there is no logical flow to the paper. Consider the transitional improvements below:

In the article “Drugs,” Gore Vidal talks about how fighting drugs has become a big business as pushing them. In the second paragraph...
Gore Vidal gives his own opinion. He believes that many drugs are bad for the majority, but nevertheless should be sold in a more sensible way.

**X Later in this article,** Vidal talks about how the United States was the first creation who believed every man has the right to do what he wishes, and in paragraph 6, he talks about how every man has the power to kill himself.

**X This point is followed by how alcohol has impacted this nation.** He cites Prohibition as being an example of the harm non-legalization of “forbidden fruit” will lead to. Vidal also talks about how the same thing is happening today, and how the government has learned nothing of our past attempts to control inebriating elements.

**X Toward the end of the article, Vidal ends with maybe his best point about how the Mafia (or, nowadays, “cartels”) was selling drugs,** and that 1970 government policies will only increase the Mafia’s control of the drug trade. He also implies that the Mafia back in 1970 was linked to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics.

**X Overall,** although Gore Vidal’s article is well-organized and highly spirited, he does not support his points very well. He lacks solid statistical evidence about the long-term effects legalization of drugs will have on the masses. By providing such evidence, he would make his position more believable and responsible. Instead he relies on questionable analogical reasoning and his own utopian views to support his points.
Helpful Websites

For further information regarding English 105 and 106, DMACC policies and resources, or general composition advice, please visit the following websites:

**DMACC Resources**

DMACC Academic Integrity website: 
https://go.dmacc.edu/learntocite/Pages/welcome.aspx

DMACC Student Handbook: https://go.dmacc.edu/handbook/Pages/welcome.aspx

DMACC policies and procedures (including Academic Misconduct and Non-Academic Misconduct): https://go.dmacc.edu/handbook/polprocedures/Pages/welcome.aspx

DMACC Libraries Online: https://go.dmacc.edu/library/Pages/welcome.aspx

DMACC help desk (support for technology and online-related questions): https://go.dmacc.edu/helpdesk/Pages/welcome.aspx

DMACC resources for online students: https://go.dmacc.edu/online/pages/welcome.aspx

**Composition Resources**

DMACC Library and Research Tools
https://go.dmacc.edu/library/Pages/researchtutorials.aspx

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University for Non-Purdue College Level Instructors and Students
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01

Bartleby’s Usage, Style, and Composition—Full Text Searchable Resources
http://www.bartleby.com/usage/

Smarthinking.com—an online writing and tutoring service for students
http://smarthinking.com/
(Note: For more information about the service and information about how to establish an account, please see http://www.dmacc.edu/smartthinking.asp.)
Works Cited


<http://www.twainquotes.com/Lightning.html>.
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