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**University Learning Center:**

**Crash Course Study Skills #9**

**Papers and Essays**

Created by Megan Miller

**Overview of the Online Academic Makeover Workshops**

Thank you for taking an interest in the Online Academic Makeover Workshops! The University Learning Center at California State University, Fullerton is passionate about helping students learn how to learn. The goal of the online workshops created by the University Learning Center is to help students understand the value of fundamental concepts that are vital to student success throughout the college experience. In addition to the high impact practice of peer-to-peer tutoring, the online workshops enable students to learn student success secrets virtually anywhere at any point throughout the academic year.

To better support student learning, a workshop packet accompanies each online workshop. Each packet has a pre-reflection, guided notes, and a post-reflection. We encourage students to answer the prompts of the pre-reflection before viewing the workshop video. There are no correct or incorrect responses since the pre-reflection serves as a tool to help the workshop participant to consider themselves and focus on the workshop content that is most relevant to them. The guided notes are intended to help the workshop participant focus on the big ideas presented in the videos. Additional notes are recommended! The workshops are most effective when participants create meaning for themselves. The post-reflection is meant to be completed after the workshop video has been viewed. This section allows the workshop participant to check and see if they understood the main ideas from the workshop and make more personal connections while considering ways to apply what was learned.

The University Learning Center appreciates your interest in our online workshop series, and we hope you learn something new!

Happy Learning!

**The University Learning Center Team**

Pollak Library North

657-278-2738

www.fullerton.edu/ulc

**Papers and Essays Online Workshop Pre-Reflection**

1. What is the first step you take to start writing a paper? Is this step always the same, or does it change for each subject/class?
2. What resources are available to you that can help you write your paper? Where can you go on your campus to receive help?
3. How long does it usually take you to complete a writing assignment? Do you spread out your writing?
4. What parts of your writing process do you like? What are some things you would like to change about how you write your papers?
5. What are you hoping to learn from the Papers and Essays Online Workshop? What questions do you have?

**Papers and Essays Workshop Guided Notes**

1. Pre-Writing
* Start out the paper writing process with a pre-writing phase
	+ Once that is done, move on to research
* Pre-writing will dredge up things you didn’t even think you knew about the topic
* When you spend some quality time writing in a focused state, your brain will make connections and serve up memories you didn’t even know you had
	+ Questions
	+ Preliminary arguments
* Pre-writing leads to more focused research
	+ You’ll have a better idea of what you’re looking for
* The pre-writing phase is NOT about cranking out a polished paper on your first try
	+ You haven’t even done your research yet
	+ A paper is a big project
		- Hammer out the basic features right away instead of trying to jump right into the detailed work
* Brain Dump
	+ A chance to get your thoughts written down
	+ Set a timer for 25 minutes then start writing
		- Pull out what you know about the topic
		- Identify questions you have
1. **The Research Process**
* Most students tend to get stuck in this phase all together

**Research Recursion Syndrome**: you get stuck in a loop of constantly looking for yet another source

* How to Not Get Stuck
1. Find your sources
2. Make yourself personal copies of your sources
	* This ensures that you’ll always have them available to you when you’re writing
3. Annotate the material
4. Consciously ask yourself if you are done
	* If no, then repeat the process
	* If yes, then it’s time to write your first real draft
* Have at least 2 sources for each main point in your thesis
	+ At least 1 source for any non-crucial points
		- This is a general suggestion
* Let the initial act of creation be free of scrutiny and restraint
	+ One of the most difficult problems writers deal with is perfectionism
		- Writing doesn’t have to be perfect the first time
* It is okay if your first draft is awful because future you will be there to edit it and shape it into something great
1. Editing
* Edit your paper in 2 separate stages
	+ Stage one: content edit
	+ Stage two: technical edit
* Content Edit
1. Does each argument support the thesis?
2. Does the paper have a good narrative flow?
3. Each argument properly fleshed out and backed up with research or external sources?
4. What can be removed or written in a clearer, simpler way
* Make sure your paper communicates your message to the reader as effectively as possible
* Technical Edit
	+ Where you identify any problems with structure or syntax
1. Spelling and grammar mistakes
2. Poorly structured sentences
3. Formatting errors
4. Sentences that just don’t sound right
* Print out your paper and go over it by hand
	+ Prevents you from making corrections on the fly
* Take time to read your paper out loud
	+ Forces you to slow down
	+ Keeps you from unconsciously skipping over words
	+ Identify sentences that don’t sound good
* To make your paper truly great, you need to let other people look it over and get their feedback
* Realize that each person can only read your paper for the first time exactly once
	+ Nobody can read your paper with fresh eyes twice
	+ Be strategic in your reviewer selection
* Make sure to explicitly ask for the kind of feedback you want
* Finally, after you’ve gotten your feedback and finished both stages of editing, print your rough draft and give it one final read through from start to finish
	+ If everything makes sense and nothing sticks out as glaringly wrong, give yourself permission to be done
* Likely, you’ve just crafted an excellent paper. Congrats!

**Papers and Essays Online Workshop Post-Reflection**

1. What did you learn from the Papers and Essays Online Workshop?
2. What was something from the Papers and Essays Online Workshop that surprised you or you found to be the most interesting?
3. Which of the concept, method, or technique discussed in the Papers and Essays Online Workshop do you think you would benefit the most from? Why?
4. Describe how you will apply what you learned from the Papers and Essays Online Workshop.