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Lesson 1: Overview

CRWE | Lesson 1: Overview

Introduction

As you work your way through College-Ready Writing Essentials (CRWE), you will:

- Get a better understanding of the kind of academic work that will be expected of you in college;
- Learn and practice key skills that will prepare you for college and career.

Along with your instructor, CRWE will guide you through the process of writing a research-supported persuasive essay—the kind of writing you'll be asked to do in your college coursework. Writing at the college level is about more than composing sentences and paragraphs.

It's also about:

- Reading perceptively;
- Thinking critically and creatively;
- Discovering and advancing your own interests and perspectives;

Contributing in a meaningful way to communities and conversations.

These are skills that are important no matter what you choose to study in college, and no matter what line of work you pursue.

Writing competently is a basic, foundational skill necessary for your success in school and in your career. Writing, reading, and thinking skills are also essential to acquire so that you can participate fully and effectively as a citizen in a democratic society.

It's important to begin developing these foundational skills as you enter college, so that you're ready for the education, work, and civic opportunities that will come after.

CRWE will help you learn and practice these skills. You'll plan, draft, revise, and finalize a 3-5 page essay. Along the way, you'll learn strategies for selecting a topic that you care about, defining a debatable issue within that topic, considering multiple

perspectives on that issue, taking a position, and supporting your position with reasoning and evidence. You'll conduct research, and you'll practice weaving the words and ideas of others into your own writing. You'll also evaluate the work of your classmates and receive their evaluations of your work in return.

College will challenge you to think and communicate with power and impact. To do well, you'll need to produce writing that is:

written and can present their ideas in a way that is accurate and relevant; • Thoughtful: your writing should demonstrate an ability to think creatively and critically about a topic; you're able to offer valuable insight into the ideas of others, and to make a meaningful contribution of your own to the conversations taking place

• Knowledgeable: your writing should demonstrate a strong understanding of your topic; you've read what other people have

- around the issues you address; • Clear: your writing should demonstrate that you can use language with clarity and precision; you craft your writing so that it is
- understandable, well-reasoned, organized, engaging, and persuasive. By the end of this unit, you will have produced a substantial piece of academic work—an essay that you can be proud of.

Info Box: Understanding the Culture of College Academics

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE OF COLLEGE ACADEMICS

Entering into college academics can be like entering a new and unfamiliar culture, with its own beliefs and customs, its own values

and unspoken assumptions. A new student joining the college classroom for the first time benefits from learning as quickly as possible: What do people here believe in? What motivates them? What do they expect from me? How do I behave in acceptable ways? How do I communicate? You'll find throughout CRWE some ideas to help you make sense of the culture of college academics. Here's the first:

Education is more than career training.

Your idea of education and your college's idea of education may be very different.

It's tempting to believe that the purpose of college is simply to get training for the work you want to do when you get out. But while

career preparation is certainly an important part of getting a college degree, the institution itself believes there is much more to education than that. In the culture of college academics, education is understood as important for creating a society that is not only wealthy, but also

democratic and just. It's also essential for developing individuals into people who are not only economically productive, but also decent and responsible and well-informed. That's why a liberal course of study designed to broaden students' view of the world serves as the foundation of a college education. You should understand why your college or university requires you to take "general education" courses—introductions to literature,

composition, biology and so forth—even if you really just want to work as a nurse, or engineer, or accountant. It's because your college has a broad, ambitious vision of education's purpose. Entering students benefit from understanding how academic culture thinks about its mission, so that they can align their own goals

and expectations with those of their school, and even embrace its vision of education for themselves. **Writing Competencies**

A lot of research has been conducted on the qualities and abilities students must develop in order to succeed in college. This

research points not only to academic knowledge and skills, but also to certain personal and social behaviors, such as a willingness to work hard and to cooperate with others. Further, research shows that successful college students also possess self-awareness: they know their own academic strengths and weaknesses, what motivates them, what their goals are. They also are aware of the social and cultural environment around them; for example, they recognize the values and assumptions that underlie their school community and the society in which it operates. CRWE is organized around these three keys to college success:

1) Knowledge and Skills;

2) **Behaviors**; and 3) Awareness.

They form the basis of the College-Ready Writing Essentials Competencies Framework. This Framework spells out in precise language exactly what these college-ready competencies look like when a student is asked to compose a research-supported

persuasive essay. Further, it identifies the qualities that show evidence of these competencies. The Competencies Framework thus serves as a guide for the lessons and exercises you'll encounter in CRWE, as well as for the evaluation of your work.

Click here to see the full CRWE Competencies Framework. **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

The knowledge and skills needed for college-ready writing can be grouped into four categories: • Writing Processes: Knowing how to plan, draft, revise, and finalize an academic essay;

• Rhetorical Knowledge: Understanding the writing task, your purposes for writing, and your audiences; knowing how to use

language and reasoning in ways that are valued and persuasive within college academics; • Critical Thinking: The ability to insightfully analyze and evaluate ideas, arguments, and perspectives from other sources, and to

- contribute your own well-reasoned ideas, arguments, and perspectives; • Knowledge of Conventions: Understanding that there are guidelines and expectations for how your academic work should be
- presented; knowing how to produce an essay that exhibits correct grammar, language mechanics, and formatting, as well as effective organization, appropriate tone and style, and careful attention to accurately presenting and citing the work of others.
- As you compose your essay, you'll have opportunities to develop and demonstrate all four of these cognitive competencies. **BEHAVIORS**

Much of your success in school—and in life, for that matter—depends on what you personally bring to the work you do. • Are you persistent, even when you're frustrated?

Are you motivated to do your best?

Do you complete all of your assignments and meet your deadlines?

Social Behaviors

Personal Behaviors

• Do you take responsibility for your own performance? These personal qualities—persistence, motivation, conscientiousness, responsibility—are essential to college-ready writing, as

Learning happens in concert with others, not in isolation. In college, you are expected to participate in classroom discussions, work collaboratively in groups, engage with instructors,

good academic social skills will be essential to your success.

the work of others and offer constructive feedback is a very valuable academic skill.

well as to your overall academic success.

College-Ready Writing Essentials provides opportunities to practice academic social skills. You'll interact with your classmates and instructor, discussing writing and other topics of interest, asking questions, seeking and providing help, and generally forming a mutually supportive academic community with the goal of helping everyone succeed.

You'll have opportunities to evaluate the work of others and to respond when others evaluate your work. Learning how to critique

review and comment on the work of your peers, and respond to the feedback you receive from others. In every case, developing

provides opportunities to go beyond the minimum requirements, and to practice meeting and exceeding obligations to yourself and others. Each time you contribute to a discussion, pursue a link to learn more about a topic, revise and rework your essay, offer help to a classmate—all of these activities are indications of successful academic behaviors.

As you make your way through CRWE, we want to encourage and reward the behaviors that lead to academic success. The unit

Successful students have the ability to reflect on their own thinking and behavior. They understand how they learn best and what motivates them. They set goals for themselves and are willing to honestly evaluate their own performance so that they can improve.

Throughout CRWE, you'll encounter discussions and exercises for self-appraisal. You'll have an opportunity to develop skills of

self-awareness that can help you improve your writing and understand and advance your own goals and interests.

Social Awareness

AWARENESS

Self Awareness

Successful students also recognize the social and cultural contexts around them. They seek to understand their relationship to the institutions and systems that shape their experience. As you pursue your education, it is important to recognize that you are situated within a particular school, a particular academic discipline, a particular community of people who have a tradition of thinking and communicating in particular ways. In other

words, you're always in relationship with the culture, people, and institutions around you; and in those relationships your personal

CRWE presents exercises and resources for learning to consider yourself and your academic studies in the broader context of the

background, experiences, identity, and values matter. The same is true outside of school—in the workplace, and in civic life.

Learning to see and understand those relationships is a necessary part of getting an education.

society and culture around you. We want to impress upon you that good writing skills—which entail good reading and thinking skills as well—will be valuable to you in your academic pursuits, in your career, and in your personal and civic life. **Language and Concepts**

the same language—students, instructors, professors, authors, and others. To participate fully in that community, you must learn

the discourse, the particular terms and concepts that the community members use to communicate with one another about the academic subject they share in common. For example, in academia there is a community of people organized around the discipline of *History*. It consists of instructors, professors, researchers, students, authors, editors, publishers, archivists, librarians, readers, and many others, who share a common language and set of concepts pertaining to the field of History. They're familiar with methods of historical research, with

When you seek an education, you become part of a community of people pursuing the same interests and quite literally speaking

theories of history, with approaches to studying and writing about history, with various types of history: social history, economic history, military history, the history of science, women's history, cultural history, and so forth. Students who elect to study history enter into this discourse community and begin to learn and use its language and concepts. Similarly, throughout CRWE you'll encounter a variety of terms and concepts that pertain to academic writing. You'll find highlighted words and phrases that refer to key dimensions of writing: persuasion, critical thinking, credibility, and many others. You're encouraged to learn and use these terms and concepts yourself, as you compose exercise responses, provide feedback on

the work of your peers, participate in classroom discussions, talk with your instructor and classmates, and so forth. In doing so,

you will become fluent in the language of the discipline of Writing. Learning this discourse will empower you to think and

communicate about writing in ways that will help you succeed in college and beyond. You can find a list of key terms and concepts here. The expectation that you learn and productively use terms and concepts associated with academic writing is reflected in the social behaviors section of the CRWE Competencies Framework (2.2.c). Rigor

CRWE is rigorous and demanding. To do well, you'll need to devote a substantial amount of time and effort. Studies show that

academic rigor is perhaps the most important factor in preparing people for college success.

Even so, it's important to note that being prepared for college means being ready to learn at the college level—not already adept at college-level work. So, while CRWE is rigorous and demanding, we also understand that you may be unfamiliar with some of the things you'll be asked to do, and that you're just starting out. It takes time and practice to master complex skills.

them.

Going Beyond Throughout CRWE you'll encounter Going Beyond exercises. These are intended to give you an opportunity to go beyond the

academic behavior. The exercises have value in themselves, but it's up to your instructor to decide whether he or she will give credit for completing

minimum requirements of the unit. Putting forth a high level of effort to advance your own knowledge and skills is a valuable

To access the first exercise, click on the link below. **Lesson 1: Going Beyond - Writing Skills and the Job Market**

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