

## Tip 4: Learn to S.E.W.

SEWing helps you stitch together a successful paper. The three letters mean "Say," give "Example," and explain "Why." The acronym helps you remember not to make your point and stop there, but to *support your point with evidence and analysis*. That's what professors like.

Here's how SEWing works

**(Say)** The supervisor responsible for training at Three Mile Island didn't behave ethically. **(Example)** In his memo of July 11, 1978, he ordered his team not to include new information on how to handle a low coolant event. **(Why)** According to Markel's guidelines for technical writing, deliberately suppressing information is unethical.

Follow this simple advice to SEW your papers together unless your assignment calls for a different style or your instructor says otherwise.

## Tip 5: Draft & Revise

In *How a Writer Works*, Roger Garrison advises, "Rewriting is the key to good writing." Never has any writing advice been more true. Leave yourself time to rewrite your first version before handing it in.

When you write your first draft, don't be supercritical. Give yourself some freedom. Then go over the draft carefully. Make sure your paper has a main point to which each paragraph contributes in its development. Paragraphs state their own points clearly, and these points relate to the paper's focus.

Also be sure you give transitions to new paragraphs and that you use clear, specific examples. Feel free to change the organization and wording, add or delete points, or refine what you've said. One of the best ways to revise is to read your draft to yourself slowly.

# How to Do a Writing Assignment

Art by Kyle Elzy & Text by Michael Jackman



**O**n the first day of class I ask students to tell me something about their writing skills and background. I get many different types of answers such as:

*"I do consider writing, by far, my weakness over any other activity in school."*

*"I am scared to death, feeling extremely lost and confused."*

*"While I honestly do not enjoy writing, I know it is important on my road to achievement and promise to put forth my best effort."*

Writing doesn't have to be unenjoyable, scare you to death, or be a weakness. Just a few simple tips can help you improve your writing. Here are five tips to help you get started.

## Tip 1: Understand the Assignment

A *Writing Assignment* is illustrated by IU Southeast English major and award-winning writer Kyle Elzy, but this brochure is *not* about him. What the brochure is about is *five tips that will help you to improve your writing*.

It's always important to understand your assignment. Make sure you're writing about the right topic. If you're not sure, ask your professor to clarify what you're supposed to be writing. If you don't know that, you're not ready to write.

## Tip 2: Follow the Criteria

Each writing assignment should have a clear list of criteria, or requirements. Your grade will depend on both *including* those requirements and following them *well*.

For example, if a writing assignment requires citing at least three sources in MLA style, then meet that criterion by citing three *excellent, relevant* sources cited in *perfect* MLA style. If you're not sure what the criteria are, ask.



## Tip 3: Always Be Specific

The more specific you are about your thesis, or point of your paper, the more you show your professor how much you know. Here's a multiple choice quiz: Which is the best paper thesis?

- a. Teenage Pregnancy
- b. The Rise in Teenage Pregnancy
- c. Education Has Not Slowed the Rise in American Teenage Pregnancy

If you guessed "c," you are right. A specific thesis not only tells the reader exactly what the paper is about, but it helps you write clearly and stick to your topic.

One more quiz: Which is the best thesis sentence?

- a. The Three Mile Island disaster caused problems.
- b. When the nuclear disaster happened, nuclear power became unpopular.
- c. After the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident in 1979, nuclear power became unpopular in America.

Again, the specifics of "c" demonstrate to the reader that the writer knows his or her subject.