

## Guidelines for COWL tutoring

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### Getting to the Essay:

1. Go to the COWL website by following the links on the Bluefield College website or by typing in <http://bcweb.bluefield.edu/cowl>.
2. Click on “The Tutor Home.”
3. On “The Tutor Home” page, click “COWL Tutoring.”
4. Login with your assigned username.
5. Click on “View Pending Essays” at the top of the page.

### COWL Tutoring Process:

1. Before opening an essay, make a note of the help requested code. You will not be able to see this information as you are actually working on the essay. (A list of these codes is included at the end of this manual.)
2. Select an essay to review.
3. Before beginning to work on the essay, it would be wise to copy (**NOT CUT**) and paste it to Microsoft Word just to be safe!
4. Choose some type of font that the student will be able to recognize as your writing. Unfortunately, colors do not show up after the essay is completed, so try bolding or italicizing the font. You might even want to do both. You can also use ALL CAPS, but be sure to tell the tutee that you are not yelling, just making your comments easier to find!
5. Include a welcome note at the beginning of the essay.

Example:

***Hi, Mark! I'm Oldbessie. Thank you for submitting your essay to COWL! You have requested help with your thesis and grammar. I will be making comments in bolded and italicized font throughout your essay. Please note that my comments will focus on the larger issues before addressing more minor ones,***

*such as problems with style and editing. Also note that the tutor's job is not to fix or edit your paper. A good way to find errors is to read your paper aloud to yourself.*

6. Read through the essay, looking for any major problems. Pay special attention to the areas indicated by the help codes. Make suggestions throughout the paper. (See "Specific Issues to Consider" for help in this area.) Remember to pace yourself because you only have thirty minutes.
7. Once you have read the essay, write a paragraph to the student explaining any underlying problems throughout the essay and summarizing comments you have made. Insert this paragraph after the welcome note OR at the end of the essay. Make sure to give encouragement here as well, point out things the student has done correctly, encouraging return visits, etc!

Example:

*Your essay with very interesting, and it is clear that you have researched this topic well! You also seem to have a strong grammatical background. There were few mistakes in this area. However, I have pointed out some problems in your citation.*

8. Save frequently! Do so by clicking "submit." Then choose the option that allows you to make more corrections later.
9. When your thirty minutes have expired, be sure you have included an invitation to evaluate COWL.

Example:

*Thank you again for using COWL. I hope that you will find my suggestions helpful, and I hope that you will use COWL again! If you have time, please send an evaluation of our services to mpellillo@bluefield.edu.*

10. Submit the essay, and choose the option that marks it complete.
11. You will be prompted to enter the codes corresponding to the help you have offered.
12. If you have forgotten to say anything, you have one last chance to do so in the "Additional Comments" area.
13. Submit the essay.

### Specific Issues to Consider:

When you tutor, keep some common problems in mind. Also remember that you will not be able to deal with every issue listed below. Be sure to deal with the more crucial issues, like thesis and content, before working on issues like grammar. Thirty minutes goes by quickly, so prioritizing becomes very important!

### Thesis

1. Is there one?
2. Is it clear?
3. Is it stated in the opening paragraph (usually should be for freshman papers, but if not, is there a valid reason for placement elsewhere)?

Many times, it is more effective to ask questions than to make statements. For example, if a student does not have a clear thesis but has two or three sentences that are close, you might ask questions like, “Is this your thesis?” or “What is the main topic of your paper?”

### Content/Development

1. Does each paragraph contain a clear topic sentence?
2. Is each paragraph’s topic sentence fully developed with examples and/or illustrations?
3. Is each example or illustration clearly relevant to the topic sentence?
4. Is the topic of each paragraph clear throughout the paragraph?
5. Overall, is the paper’s content treated thoughtfully and in-depth?

### Organization:

1. Does the paper engage the reader with an interesting introduction?
2. Is there a logical order to the body paragraphs?
3. Does the essay use appropriate, effective transition words or sentences between each paragraph?
4. Does each paragraph start and remain focused on one main idea?
5. Does the conclusion clearly and strongly reinforce the main idea/thesis of the paper?
6. Does the conclusion bring closure to the essay in a thoughtful, stimulating way?

### Style:

1. Is the use of person consistent throughout the paper?
2. Is the word choice (diction) appropriate?
3. Is each individual sentence clear?
4. Does the student consistently use active voice?
5. Does the paper contain an excessive number of words?

### Editing

1. Are there any recurring grammatical errors?

2. If yes, what type of error is recurring? Look for errors in the following areas:

Comma splices  
 Run-on sentences  
 Sentence fragments  
 Pronoun/antecedent agreement

3. Are there any recurring mechanical errors?  
 4. If yes, what type of error?

Remember that it is not your job to be a proofreader, and there is no way you can fix every problem in a paper! Your job is to help the student understand why his mistake is really a mistake and how he can correct it, starting with the more major problems. To prevent yourself from becoming a proofreader, point out some examples of problems the student has and their solutions. For example, instead of saying “Insert a comma here,” say, “When you have three or more items in a series, it is necessary to include commas between each of the items.”

Instead of simply correcting problems for the student, which you might instinctively want to do, suggest that he look up the solution for himself using one of the available resources. Included at the end of this manual are a list of helpful websites and a Quick Handbook Guide.

Example:

***Hi, I'm Oldbessie! Thank you for submitting your essay to COWL! I will be making suggestions throughout your essay in bolded and italicized font. My comments will focus more on the larger issues before addressing problems with style and editing.***

***Your essay is full of good details, and it is clear that these ladies have impacted your dreams!***

***Before you read any further, I would suggest going to this website: <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/gramamar/>. Under “Word and Sentence Level,” check out the sections on commas and fragments. Spend some time getting familiar with the rules. If you have time, you will probably also want to look at the section on quotation marks. Once you’ve done this, read your paper out loud to yourself because you will actually be able to hear a lot of your mistakes!***

***You have a thesis, which is very important! You have also done a good job of making the body of your paper follow the order set out in your thesis. However, you have very long paragraphs and each paragraph deals with more than one subject. Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence, and then only include sentences that have to do with that topic in each paragraph. For example, in your section about Mrs. Drayton,***

*maybe you could have one paragraph about how she helped you when your mother died, one paragraph about how she helped you with your schoolwork in first grade, and one paragraph about how she helped when you left for college.*

*You have a good start here. Remember that good writing takes a lot of editing and rewriting, so don't be discouraged! For extra help, you might consider scheduling a face-to-face tutoring session in the Writing Center.*

Assignment:

Teachers who mold my dreams. 5 to 6 pages. Briefly describe 3 to 4 teachers who mold my dreams.

Help Requested:

grammar correction, verb tenses, comma correction, flowing smoothly.

Essay:

Molders of my Dreams

If you (*Professors often discourage the use of the word "you" in writing. "You" is a direct address to the audience, and it often puts your audience in a defensive mode. Try to reword the sentence so that you don't have to use it.*) asked most people what comes to mind when they hear the word "teacher". *This (previous thought) is not a complete sentence because the word "if" is what is called a "subordinating conjunction" and turns the clause into something that depends on the rest of the sentence, which is missing in this case, for its meaning. You can correct this by joining it with the next sentence to make it a complete thought by adding a comma after teacher (but inside the quotation marks).* They might use words like, hard, boring, and strict. *Maybe you could fix all the problems in the first two sentences by writing something like this: When most people think about teachers, the words that come to mind are "hard," "boring," and "strict."* However when I hear the word teacher the first word that comes to mind is "inspiration". (*The period goes inside the quotes.*) If a teacher gives you (*change word—a student? me?*) more from a class than (*"Then" refers to time. The word that shows comparison is "than."*), information on the subject they are teaching (*This is another dependent clause because of the way you have used "if." Maybe join it with the next sentence?*). That is a teacher who cares. I think teachers should approach every class with the idea that their students' future depends (*You have a plural possessive but a singular noun and a singular verb. They all need to agree. To fix this, you could change it to "students' futures depend."*) on the lesson they are teaching every moment of every class. Throughout the years, growing up as a student, I had many teachers who inspired my future goals. As a result they became molders of my dreams. Some of the teachers who place (*placed?*) a permanent stamp on my heart were Mrs. Drayton, Coach Tammy Jones and Mrs. Drayton. *This is a good thesis. It tells the reader the order of your paper and what you are going to focus on. To further strengthen thesis you might be more specific about the ways in which each of these teachers influenced you.*

My Drayton (who was a teacher's helper) *This phrase could be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence, so it can be set off with commas.* become an inspiration in my heart during the toughest time in my life. *(Because of time limitations, I have not made grammar suggestions past this point You however need to continue editing your own paper based on the comments I have made in earlier sections. Feel free to return to COWL with another draft.)* She was one of the best teachers I ever had, although her job title was a little different than most teachers. In 1990 when I was only eight years old my mother died, this left me feeling lonely, afraid and deprived of a mother's love. Mrs. Drayton was the first teacher, I can remember, who took a path to try to help a young child cope with the lost of her mother. She would do anything for me. Sometimes she would have to straighten me out, by giving me a little pinch in the hallway, when she saw me doing something I was not supposed to do. She would buy me clothes and help me with my reading class and other subjects I need help in.

I remember when I was in the first grade; my reading comprehension level was lower than other students. She would take time to sit me down and make me read. Every word I had trouble with, she would make me sound the whole word out until I said it correctly. I remember when I was about to go off to college, Mrs. Drayton come over the day before I was about to leave. When she walked out the car, she had about fifteen bags in her hand filled with utilities and other items that a college student needs. It was probably three to four hundred dollars worth necessities. That really moved me, because I had lost contact with her but she did not loose contact with me. My oldest sister would tell me every other day how she asked about me and how I was doing. Now that I think about it, I wish I took the time to respond back. Even though I didn't tell her, I think she knew that I would love her forever. She was someone who would accept the challenge regardless of who or what was in her way. For a long time, I couldn't understand why she loves me so much but now I do. It was because she saw something in me that I couldn't see in myself. She saw a very intelligent young woman, who could excel in anything she puts her mind to. She was one of the most beautiful people I knew; she showed me her heart of compassion, encouragement and belonging as one of her daughter.

Another teacher that impacted my life was my sister, Angela Britton. She was a teacher, sister, mentor, mother and friend all in one. She is probably the strongest and most dedicated teacher in the world. She took on the huge responsibility of raising her three sisters because it was our mother last wish before she died. She was only 23 when we went to live with her. She had her own house, a husband and a good teaching job. She had to juggle all those things at once and she surpass in all of them. She did all the things that a mother would do for her kids. She took us in and filled us with respect and dignity for others and ourselves. She was a teacher who painted her student mind and guide they're thought with excellent. She shares their achievements and advises their faults. She use to come home everyday and tell me something good or bad her student had done. Each lesson she taught helps me reach my goals and make my smile grow wider. She was someone who could see potential in others and believe in the best in you. I feel god had a plan for our family and it was to help led each other to a wiser and promising future. She is probably the biggest molder of my dreams because her love, compassion, friendship,

high standing of achievements and her love for teaching. She is a molder of my dreams and the light that sparks the flames of my future.

A third teacher that inspired my dreams was my High School coach Tammy Jones. She was more than a coach to me; she was someone that would touch students and train them to do their best. She was a teacher who was honest, giving and gave me a sense of pride. I can remember when I first came to High school and I was so scared to try-out because I thought I was not good enough. So she restored the confidence and high self-esteem in me by telling me things to lift my spirits up and my game. She was a coach that didn't yell a lot at her players to get them out of their game. She would just go up to them and explain to them that I know you are better than this, so let see it. Those words that she uses to tell me stay with me tell today because it molded me into the playing I am. I am a very good player today because of her dedication, loyalty, honesty, leadership and excellent coaching ability. She was a coach who first priority was to convey that she cares and second prepare us for life and basketball. She would even praise the efforts of players who weren't as talented as others. Also she encourages children to have a dream, to work at solving their own problems and building their self-esteem. Teachers mold our hearts eternally and even if they say one word, that word can mean the world to you because you know that teacher cares.

*Thank you again for using COWL. I hope that you will find my suggestions helpful, and I hope that you will use COWL again! If you have time, please send an evaluation of our services to [mpellillo@bluefield.edu](mailto:mpellillo@bluefield.edu).*

Other Resources:

#### Helpful Websites:

Guide to Grammar and Writing

<http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>

Strunk and White

<http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

Adult student info

[http://208.11.226.12/bluefield/adult\\_education\\_cowl\\_information.htm](http://208.11.226.12/bluefield/adult_education_cowl_information.htm)

Perdue Online Writing Lab for APA style

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_apa.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html)

Page on in-text citations

<http://www.wisc.edu/writetest/Handbook/DocAPACitations.html>

Grammar Bytes

<http://www.chompchomp.com/menu.htm>

Big Dog's Grammar

<http://aliscot.com/bigdog/>

Agreement - Person

<http://writesite.cuny.edu/grammar/general/person/>

### Quick Handbook Guide:

Keep this guide handy as you tutor and refer your tutee to sections as needed.

	Freshman English	Adult Education
	The Writer's Pocket Handbook	The Writer's Pocket Handbook
Thesis	12-13	15
Topic Sentences	14-18	16-17
Sentence Construction	21-22, 25, 33-36, 80-81	25-31
Sentence Variety	33-36	21-31
Run-ons	80-81	21-26
Fragments	78-79, 256	7
Verb Tenses	63-76, 257	31
Paragraph Development	16-18	15-17
Transitional Sentences	19-20, 99, 257	17
Organization	18-21, 42, 52	
Clarity/Directness	18, 29-31, 36-37	79-80
Style	31	66-81
Language Formal/Informal	37-38	34, 76-79, 80-81
Subject-Verb Agreement	56-60	9-11
Commas	92-97	5-7
Comma Splices	80-81, 250	6
Semicolons	98-100	6
Capitalization	116-119	3
Quotation Marks	104-107	36-37
Numbers	123, 111	35
Abbreviations	120-121	3

Documentation	178-239	See guide.
MLA	178-196	
APA	203-213	
Chicago	220-232	
Editing/Revision	20-22	72

**Help Codes:**

**Print this guide out for use when completing your tutoring forms.**

a	Any
c	Content
c-cl	Clarity
c-d	Development
e	Editing
e-a	Agreement
e-art	Articles
e-c	Commas
e-cap	Capitalization
e-cit	Citation
e-cs	Comma Splice
e-ct	Contractions
e-f	Fragments
e-fm	Format
e-g	Grammar
e-mw	Missing Words
e-org	Organization
e-p	Possession
e-punc	Punctuation
e-q	Quotations
e-r	Run-on
e-rep	Repetition
e-sc	Semi-colon
e-sp	Spelling
e-t	Typos
e-vt	Verb Tense
o-c	Conclusion
o-in	Introduction
o-s	Support
o-t	Transitions
o-ts	Topic Sentences

s	Style
s-eu	English Usage
s-l	Language
s-p	Person
s-sc	Sentence Construction
s-v	Voice
s-wc	Word choice
t	Thesis