

Writing develops personal and social literacy. The act of writing is a way of knowing, a way of thinking, and a way of doing. Writing provides a framework for intellectual growth, critical inquiry, and social imagination through the use of rhetorical inquiry and collaborative learning practices.

## Critical Collaborative Writing Process



Writers activate background knowledge and build confidence in their writing by focusing on individual talents and perspectives. Through collaborative learning, writers develop the knowledge and abilities necessary to produce effective written work.

The Marian University Writing Center believes that everyone is a writer. We work with writers to develop skills of written expression and inquiry, and we help writers discover a writing process that works for them. Through the use of critical and collaborative inquiry, the Marian University Writing Center encourages writers to develop habits of mind and ways of approaching writing that can be transferred to a broad range of personal, professional, academic, and social purposes.

# Strategies for the Writing Process

## Process: Or how you go about writing!

### Be Strong and Active

Did you know that being physically active can help your writing? Kurt Vonnegut did pushups before he wrote!

Strong verbs and nouns are those that pack a lot of meaning, and are appropriately specific to conjure an effective image. “Great Dane” is more specific than “dog” and therefore creates a stronger image. “Sprinted” is stronger than “moved” and therefore provides more powerful meaning.

**Active Voice** means the person acting is your subject. “I hit the ball.” is active voice while “The ball was hit by me.” is passive voice.

### Showing and Telling

Details allow readers to gain clearer understanding of what a writer is attempting to convey. Some details tell by using concrete and direct language. Some details show by using vivid imagery and symbolic language. Telling details are useful when writing for an audience who appreciates direct and matter-of-fact language. Showing details are helpful when writing stories, eliciting emotions, or generating mental images.

#### Example 1:

*Simple sentence:* “The man is a carpenter with many tools.”

*Telling sentence:* “The carpenter has an arrangement of commonly used tools hanging from his work belt.”

*Showing sentence:* “A saw and hammer dangled from his belt, and when he bent over she saw several long wood-shavings caught in his curly beard.”

#### Example 2:

*Simple sentence:* “The temperature dropped overnight.”

*Telling sentence:* “The temperature fell 30 degrees Fahrenheit overnight, reaching a low of 50 degrees from a daytime high of 80 degrees.”

*Showing sentence:* “The morning air was bitter ice in her nose and mouth, and dazzling frost covered every bud and branch.”

Ask yourself: Which type of sentence is appropriate for what you are attempting to write and the audience you are writing to?”

### Understanding Formatting Expectations

Formal and academic writing generally adheres to particular expectations known as styles. Each style is like a set of instructions that explain stylistic preferences and provide insight about how to format the document and content. The most widely used style guides are provided by the Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), University of Chicago (Chicago style), and the Associated Press (AP).

	MLA 8th	APA 6th	Chicago 17th	AP
<b>Where will you find it?</b>	English/language courses, humanities	Natural sciences, social sciences, education	Philosophy, anthropology, history, theology, humanities, and general writing guidelines	Newspapers, magazines, websites, and business documents
<b>Main Uses?</b>	Examination of written and literary culture	Research (quantitative and qualitative) and generation of theory	Book and manuscript publishers, scholarly articles in some humanities and social science disciplines	Current events, journalism, business writing, general purpose
<b>Distinguishing formatting features</b>	No cover page, references listed on “Works Cited” page	References listed on “References” page	Footnotes with bibliography, hyperlink, <i>ibid.</i> ; References listed on “Bibliography” page	References and citations are only listed within the article body
<b>Suggested tense</b>	Literary present tense for print source materials	Past tense for source materials	No preference specified	No preference specified
<b>1st, 2nd, or 3rd person preferred</b>	Prefers 3rd person; avoid 1st person in research writing; avoid all 2nd person	Prefers 3rd person; 1st person may be used when necessary; avoid 2nd person	No preference specified	No preference specified
<b>Gender neutral, singular they</b>	No, “He/She” is suggested	Yes, if for gender diversity; no, if for stylistic reasons; avoid “he/she”	Yes, if for gender diversity; limited or informal for stylistic reasons	Yes, if for gender diversity; Yes, for stylistic purposes
<b>Serial/Oxford comma</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Example in-text citation</b>	...” (Hurston 96).	(Hurston, 2000, p. 96)	...Hurston’s novel” <sup>1</sup> ; Or, (Hurston 2000, 96)	...Hurston’s 1937 novel <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> ...

**MLA 8th Works Cited**  
**APA 6th References**  
**Chicago 17th Bibliography**

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.  
Hurston, Z. N. (2006). *Their eyes were watching God*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.  
Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.

# Understanding Conventions of Writing

## Norms: Everything you are, do, or say, your ideologies and what you bring... The things that for you are “normal.”

### “To Be” Verbs

- “He be lost!”
- “He is lost right now, and he gets lost a lot.”

These sentences mean the same thing, but make use of different grammatical structures. The first uses the “habitual be” where “be” means an event is commonplace. The second takes three times as long to say the same thing! The “habitual be” is common in African American, Caribbean, and Appalachian versions of English, as well as in many other languages like Turkish.

With so many different grammars and the one we use changing based on the situation at hand, which one is right? We view language in terms of “appropriateness” or which grammar would be appropriate for a particular situation or audience. A tutor might ask, “Who is the audience?” or “What is your goal for the paper?” which are both questions that zero in on the appropriate language and grammar for your writing.

### The “Grandmother Test”

- To best friend: “Whaddup, man! Where you been?”
- To Grandmother: “Hi, Grandma! How have you been?”
- To the Pope: “Hello, Father. How have you been doing?”

Greet your best friend, then imagine how you’d say the same thing to your grandmother to see how your own language changes based on the situation. Notice the main verb, “doing” dropped in the first two examples, and the helping verb “have” dropped in the second.

## Mechanics: How you structure your writing

### The Comma

Oh, the comma: Commas cause many frustrations for all writers. It’s okay to recognize that commas can be tricky. If you feel shaky on your use of commas, remember to ask a trusted reviewer to read through your draft. There are many comma “rules.” Some of these rules are non-negotiable, some are suggested, and some are optional. Here are some common comma myths:

- “Long sentences must have a comma.” Nope. While it’s true that long sentences often contain commas, the length of a sentence does not determine comma usage. Many long sentences are written correctly without the use of commas.
- “Insert a comma wherever you pause.” This isn’t always true. Conversational English is sometimes different than written forms of English, and people may pause in different places.
- “It’s impossible to learn all of the comma rules.” While there are always exceptions to the rule, most comma rules follow predictable patterns. The more you write and reflect on your writing, the easier comma usage becomes.

If you aren’t sure about where to place a comma, ask us! Also, check out our comma guidelines located on our webpage at [marian.edu/writing-center](http://marian.edu/writing-center).

## Tips and Tricks: Or tools to strengthen your writing

### Getting Demonstrative: This, that, these, and those

*This, that, these, and those* are tricky parts of speech, and they can be used in many different ways. However, these parts of speech are referred to as “demonstratives” because they typically need more explanation of some kind. You would never answer the question “What do you have?” with “This” unless, of course, you *demonstrated* by pointing or nodding or holding out what “this” is. Because their intent may be unclear in writing, always make sure a demonstrative is used appropriately. When you come across a *this, that, these, or those*, ask yourself: “Do I really need this word? How would my sentence sound without it?”

### Is it it’s or its?

Apostrophes are for contractions or combinations of two or more words. So if something belongs, then it’s “its.” If you could lengthen the phrase to “it is” then it’s “it’s.”

- “It’s [it is] the boat.”
- “The dog loves its boat.”

# Lessons from the Greats

## Keep Writing!

Research on writing has shown that writing is a learned skill. This means that in order to become proficient at writing, you have to keep writing. A lot.

*"It's not really that mystical. It's, like, repeated practice over and over and over again and suddenly you become something you had no idea you could really be."*

**Ta-Nehisi Coates**



## Own the Page

Even though you may have never tried to write in a particular way, attack it like you've done it your whole life. Write with confidence, and don't be afraid to make mistakes. Mistakes are how we learn to write, and a powerful and confident voice can drown out uneasiness and doubt.

*"Under the boots stepping over my head, I still write as if I am an empress or a dictator."*

**Hoda Barakat**



## Pick Your Time

**Haruki Murakami** gets up at 4 a.m. to write for six hours. For **Maya Angelou**, it was always 6:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Successful writers not only make writing a priority, they also carve out a very particular time to do it. Whether you've got something to do for a class or not, even taking 10 minutes to reflect on what you're doing in your writing-related classes can help you grapple with the material and make your writing assignments flow much easier. Then, when you need to write, you'll already be in rhythm.



## Write Your Way In

If you feel stuck when you sit down to write, take a moment to write a letter to a friend. Once you've been writing for about five minutes, go back to your paper and start again. You may find it much easier. This is the method that **John Steinbeck** used while writing *East of Eden*. He wrote a letter to his editor every single day.



## Write from a Place You Know

Everyone has a beautiful and unique storehouse of knowledge that cannot be replicated by anyone else. Our culture, experience, and perspective are all invaluable assets that give us stories and unique insight across the whole spectrum of writing, from academic to personal.

*"I am a woman, and I am a Latina. Those are the things that make my writing distinctive. Those are the things that give my writing power."*

**Sandra Cisneros**

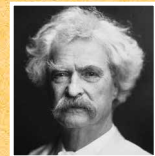


## Order Yourself

Try writing the body of your paper first. Move to the conclusion and introduction once you know what you're writing about.

*"The time to begin writing an article is when you have finished it to your satisfaction. By that time you begin to clearly and logically perceive what it is that you really want to say."*

**Mark Twain**



The Marian University Writing Center is open to Marian students as well as high school students and Indianapolis community members.

### Appointments can be made:

**Online:** [marian.edu/writing-center](http://marian.edu/writing-center)

**Email:** [writingcenter@marian.edu](mailto:writingcenter@marian.edu)

**Phone:** 317.955.6244

**Walk-in:** Visit the Clare Hall location

### Locations and Hours

Marian University Writing Center  
3200 Cold Spring Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46222

### Clare Hall 021

- Monday and Thursday: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Tuesday and Wednesday: 7 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Friday: Noon-3 p.m.

### Mother Theresa Hackelmeier Memorial Library (first floor)

- Sunday: 3-9 p.m.
- Wednesday and Thursday: 6-9 p.m.

### The Exchange (located in the library)

- Wednesday: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

### Flanner Community Writing Center

2424 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46208

- Monday and Thursday: 3-6 p.m.

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