

# THE WRITING CENTER

SPRING 2005 BULLETIN

## CONTACT US

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## WEBSITE

[www.umt.edu/writingcenter](http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter)

## DIRECTOR

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**Tutoring** 243-2266

Open weekdays, Jan. 31 - May 10.  
Referrals and walk-ins welcome.

**Workshops** 243-2470

Custom workshops in your class,  
seminar, or department. Call to arrange.

## Writing Assistants

Assigned by The Writing Center to help  
faculty critique, but not grade, students'  
drafts in courses. Call x2470 by Feb. 1  
to request a WA for spring semester.

## Online Help

Go to [www.umt.edu/writingcenter](http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter)  
for links to lessons, exercises, and style  
guides on the web's best sites.

## Want More From Tutors? Put It In Writing

Every day, UM students come into the  
Writing Center and demonstrate that  
they do not understand the assignment  
they are working on. How do we know?  
Tutors routinely ask each student they

see two questions: "What is the  
assignment?" and "Can I see the written  
instructions for it?" Too often, the  
student reports that he is supposed to  
*tell about, summarize or report what  
happened*. But the written instructions  
usually ask the student to *evaluate,*  
*analyze, or critically review* source  
material for the paper.

We might attribute the students'  
misunderstanding to laziness or  
attention deficit, but other explanations  
are possible. One popular with  
composition specialists is that many  
undergraduate students—either  
developmentally or experientially—  
assume that learning is just the  
accumulation of information. These  
students may view their instructors as  
filling them with bits of information;  
consequently they suppose that papers  
are made by filling the pages with as  
many bits and pieces as can be  
remembered.

Armed with good written instructions,  
the Writing Center tutor can teach these  
students what it means to grapple with  
information, to question premises,  
search for evidence, and stake out a  
position. Instead of enabling an  
unwanted summary, the tutor can  
promote the kind of critical thinking that  
most instructors want their students to  
do

## Want More (cont.)

in their papers.

You can do several things to get  
more from tutors and students. **First**,  
always give your students complete,  
clear, written instructions for a formal  
writing assignment. Oral instructions or  
written instructions that depend on oral  
instructions are easily misremembered  
or trivialized as they are recorded in a  
notebook.

**Second**, when you refer students to  
The Writing Center, be sure to mention  
that they must take the written  
instructions to the tutor. Tutors have  
been known to send students home for

a copy of the assignment if they arrive without it.

**Third**, you can send The Writing Center an electronic copy of your writing assignment(s) for a particular semester. We will keep these instructions on file for the sole purpose of using them with your students. Send them to [growl@mso.umt.edu](mailto:growl@mso.umt.edu) well before the due date and we will use them when your student forgets to bring them. Please identify the course name and number clearly.

**Finally**, you have the option of creating a brief feedback form specific to your course or paper. These forms are filled out by tutors at the end of a tutoring session and are returned to you by the student. They allow you to see what occurred in the tutoring session and they give tutors a better idea of your key expectations. All such forms must be approved by Writing Center staff before adoption. Call or email the Center beginning Jan. 24 to develop a form for your spring writing assignments.

## **Tackling Plagiarism in 2005**

With the onslaught of internet invitations to plagiarism, it would be easy for faculty to give up on policing academic dishonesty. The Writing Center urges faculty to resolve to develop a common-sense plan for preventing plagiarism and reacting to it.

Before you develop your plan, consult the Mansfield Library's webpage on plagiarism at [www.lib.umt.edu/services/plagiarism/index.htm](http://www.lib.umt.edu/services/plagiarism/index.htm). This page and its links give a succinct overview of plagiarism, which you can share with your students.

To prevent plagiarism, make your writing assignments reflect the writing process. Collect student notes, assignment journals, or drafts in addition to the final draft. You do not have to read the pre-writing materials carefully, but you can assign points for them. Use

in-class writing and micro-themes on the student's proposed paper topic to view the development of an original paper in the student's mind. Last minute topic changes and a highly polished paper don't usually go hand in hand.

When you suspect plagiarism, ask the student to show you the early drafts of the paper and discuss his writing process with you. Even if you search online databases to prove that the paper is pilfered, you have to confront the student anyway—you may feel less like a cop if you skip the detective work.

Plagiarism impedes learning: let's resolve to teach this lesson while we have the chance.