

WAC tips for writing assistants

The Flip Side of Time Management

As much as they desire to manage the demands of the writing assistant role with the demands of their own studies, writing assistants also seek to *work enough* with their faculty member and students to experience a connection to the professor, the course, and the students and to develop their own teaching practice.

Being selected and trained as a writing assistant (WA), and meeting initially with the professor and introducing yourself to the class, are first steps in presenting yourself as an assistant and a tutor. To promote your skills and availability to the professor and the students and encourage them to turn to you as a resource, you'll sometimes have to be an advocate of your own services. Here are some promotional ideas:

- At the start of the semester, schedule a time to visit the class and introduce yourself. Prepare to make a few remarks, telling the students about your background and in what ways you are prepared to work with them. Be specific – many students have not worked with a writing tutor before, and they are not aware of how tutors can help at many stages of the writing process. Communicate that you are available to work with them on paper drafts, yet also mention, for example, how meeting to brainstorm paper ideas can help discover focus and lay out next steps.
- Ask the professor for the class e-mail contact list. A week or so before the first paper deadline, send out a brief e-mail to students reminding them of your availability and welcoming them to make an appointment with you.
- Offer the professor your service of commenting on student drafts -- and papers, too -- if she's open to it. If the professor says that she prefers to handle all the written comments on student work, ask her if instead you could do a very focused commenting task. For example, perhaps the professor would appreciate a WA who is willing to scrutinize a batch of papers for proper formatting and citations, leaving the professor to comment on the writing.
- If you plan to hold regular office hours in Java City or another campus location, send the students a periodic e-mail reminding them of your schedule and welcoming them to stop by.
- When writing a final comment on a draft that could benefit from a tutoring conference, consider jotting at the end of your comment an off-hand invitation to make an appointment, like, "Amy, we could talk more about transitions in a writing conference. Be in touch if you'd like to make an appointment."