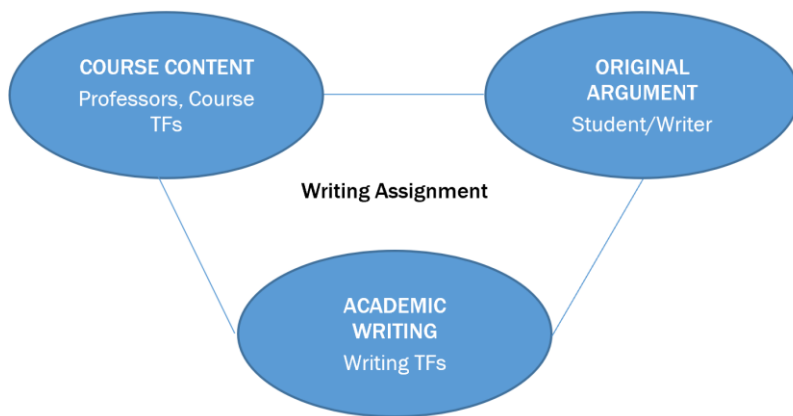


Preparing for Your Writing Center Appointment

What do TFs help with?

Writing TFs are senior HGSE doctoral students in their dissertation phase. They come from diverse writing backgrounds and collectively represent a broad range of writing expertise (see [our website](#) for more about our TFs). All are intimately familiar with faculty expectations and the student experience and can work with you as a writing coach regardless of their personal research interests.

Areas of expertise during a writing appointment



Writing TFs have academic writing experience.

Your teaching team can best answer questions about the subject matter or course expectations.

You are the expert in your ideas about the material.

When you visit, please do...

Leave time to revise. Schedule your appointment with enough time to incorporate feedback afterwards—at least 24 hours before the deadline.

Share your draft and prompt. Share your draft and assignment information with your TF a few hours before the appointment, preferably as a cloud-based document (e.g. SharePoint, OneDrive, Google docs), or by email if necessary. Although TFs don't pre-read drafts, we'll have it ready to go to make the most of your appointment time.

Consider your goals. Appointment times are limited, so make the most of yours by focusing your TF's attention and helping them help you.

- **Brainstorming/outline stage:** Read the prompt and come to the appointment with preliminary topic ideas or research questions. Review class notes, readings, and/or materials that will inform the assignment; identify main topics and themes of the course. TFs can help you refine your ideas, but cannot generate them.

Consider your goals.

- **Draft stage:** What are your concerns about the paper? What would you like the TF to help you with? Are there certain sections that were challenging to write, or writing skills you'd like to develop?

For more on how to set writing goals, see below.

Please don't...

Assume content knowledge.

All TFs have experience in writing and education research, but not necessarily in the subject of your course, and they may not be familiar with the content of your paper.

Ask for proofreading.

If you're concerned about your language use, we have some suggestions below.

Cancel without notice.

Please do not ask your TF to delay, extend, or reschedule your appointment time. You may cancel or reschedule through the website up to 12 hours in advance. If you must cancel last-minute, notify your TF by email.

Swap your spot.

TFs prepare to meet with you specifically, including reviewing your intake form and getting your materials ready. Please don't offer your appointment to another student.

Bring a group.

We work best one-on-one.

Bring two papers.

We cannot address multiple assignments in one appointment.

Double-book.

While you can make two appointments for different assignments in one week, please do not make back-to-back appointments with the same TF in one day.

Setting goals for an appointment

TFs can discuss any part of the writing process, such as structure, organization, argument, flow, analysis, using evidence, style, or techniques for revision, but you should come prepared with ideas about what you want to work on.

If you're not sure what to ask, you can:

- Describe what's been most challenging or worrisome about writing.
- Read the assignment prompt and/or rubric for criteria to focus on.

- Review feedback you've received on previous assignments and pick one or two comments to focus on in your current draft.
- Select an important quote or other piece of evidence and the main idea it supports and ask the TF to help you revise your paraphrase.
- Highlight parts of your draft you feel are long, unclear, or too wordy, and ask if you can revise them together.
- If you're concerned about English word choice and confirming that your ideas are correctly translated, it's helpful to come prepared to discuss specific sentences/short excerpts from the assignment.

English language and grammar

TFs are not necessarily experts in grammar, but can work with you to research your questions about citation format, grammar or style principles, word choice, etc. If you have already spent time reflecting on your writing style, habits, and common errors beforehand, the TF can be more helpful. A few tips for identifying your language errors:

- While you're working on a draft or even after speaking in class, notice the times when you pause and struggle to figure out what to say. Jot it down: for example, "wrong verb tense", "unsure which transition word is right," or "mixed up affect/effect".
- Highlight sentences in your draft when you are unsure if the wording is correct
- Ask a friend or colleague to read the draft and mark errors without correcting them
- Research common tips and errors in academic writing and look for them in your own draft. The [Writing Center resource list](#) is a good place to start.

Questions? Need more support? Email
communicate@gse.harvard.edu.