

Writing Matters

Spring 2010

Write Away, First Day



The Writing Program at Stetson

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Wondering how to get your students writing in class? Start the very first day.

A 5 minute writing assignment in class the first day can do a lot for you.

If you can get a sample of how students actually write, you learn which students will need additional help in writing—as well as which students have strong skills already.

You may also get a preview of what students may be expecting from your course and from you.

And you may learn what the student already knows about his or her writing weaknesses.

Students often seem like books with blank pages in the first few days of the semester, until they start talking and writing. The sooner you get a sense of how they write and think, the sooner those blank pages are filled.

--keep it short
--keep it simple
--keep it clear

What kind of brief assignment should you offer?

Ask students to write a paragraph or two about what they're expecting from the course: what do they expect to learn? What do they bring with them to this experience? What are they hoping for?

OR

Ask students to write a brief summary of what they've heard in class. (This assignment also tells you who's paying attention, who can summarize, and who will need attention.)

OR

Ask students to tell you about themselves: something unique they bring to the classroom, or an experience they've had that relates to the course content, or what they learned last semester about how to succeed in college.

There's no need to grade this first day assignment. Use these assignments as sources of information, not items for evaluation.