

Make Your Students Better Writers

1. Think ahead! Outline each assignment and the writing process clearly.

- *Communicate with your professor:* Make sure that YOU understand the assignment clearly, and that you, the professor, and your fellow TF's are on the same page.
- *Communicate with your students:* Devote time to outlining the assignment with your students.
- *Scaffold the writing:* Make sure that your students have the necessary information and skills to complete the assignment. This requires that you think ahead about what your students need from you, and that you use section time to address those needs. Scaffolding may take the form of mini-lessons or workshops to build skills or interim deadlines that allow you to assess how well students understand the assignment before the paper is due

2. Walk students through appropriate sources.

- *Teach students to select sources:* Meet one-on-one with students or offer a mini-workshop to direct them toward sources appropriate to their interests.
- *Teach students to analyze sources:* Prepare students to analyze primary and secondary sources in section. Provide sample sources similar to those students will examine in their essays and walk through an analysis with them. This may take the form of large-group discussion or small group activities.

3. Teach your students to write clear thesis statements.

- *Model:* Provide students with a sample of a good thesis statement. This may be a prewritten thesis that you discuss in section, or it may take the form of a thesis-writing activity in which students work together to draft a thesis based on section material.
- *Practice:* Shortly after they choose their topic, students should draft a preliminary thesis statement for their paper. Make sure students understand that these are *preliminary* thesis statements, and are likely to change as students engage their materials more closely. Pair-shares can be a useful tool to help students think through the strengths and weaknesses of their thesis statements.
- *Next steps:* Show students how to support their thesis statements with evidence. Recommend that students submit an outline. If necessary, walk students through a sample outline in section.

4. Work with your students on the writing process.

- *Provide writing lessons:* Anticipate and address common writing problems through optional workshops, mini-lessons in section, handouts, or one-on-one meetings.
- *Provide feedback:* Make grading a learning experience. Be clear with students about what they have done well and in what areas their writing needs work.