

Introductory Composition at Purdue

STUDENT GUIDE

WHAT IS INTRODUCTORY COMPOSITION?

why am i here?

Students at Purdue have diverse academic interests and professional goals. And although not every student at Purdue is an English major or strives to become a career writer, the ability to communicate creatively and effectively is important to all of us for several reasons: 1) it provides us an outlet for sharing our ideas and an opportunity for making those ideas better; 2) it empowers us to understand different conventions, genres, groups, societies, and cultures; and 3) it allows us to have a voice in multiple academic, civic, and personal situations. In short, writing is a way of learning that spans all fields and disciplines.

Introductory Composition at Purdue is designed to help you:

- ◆ build confidence in your abilities to create, interpret, and evaluate texts in all types of media;
- ◆ develop knowledge and inspire new ideas through writing;
- ◆ understand, evaluate, and organize your ideas;
- ◆ articulate, develop, and support a topic through first-hand and archival research;
- ◆ become an effective writer who can respond credibly and accurately to a variety of writing situations.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENGLISH 106 AND ENGLISH 108?

English 106, 106I, 106R – English Composition

English 106 is the standard 4-credit hour composition course for entering students at Purdue. To meet all your goals in this one-semester course, you should expect to produce between 7,500-11,500 words of polished writing (or 15,000-22,000 total words, including drafts) or the equivalent. Some of this text production will be done using multimedia, and some of it may be given through short assignments. Your writing topics will be closely tied to the course's theme or approach, and may include personal experiences as well as research-based arguments. You may also be asked to write on topics that are related to your major field of study.

what do we do in this class?

It is common practice in English 106 to conduct different types of research to create a final project that culminates the expertise you have gained over the semester. Your instructor may use planning assignments in order to help you discover and explore a topic, angle, or audience. It is also common practice to spend time in exploration of topics and rhetorical contexts, and in the production, interpretation, and analysis of multimedia environments.

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You will also spend time reading and discussing writing by you, your peers, and professionals. Your instructors may accomplish this through in-class review sessions or in bi-weekly conferences. Additionally, your instructors may select outside readings related to the theme of the class or similar in purpose to the writing they expect you to do.

*what
is 108?*

English 108 – Accelerated First-Year Composition

English 108 is an accelerated 3-credit hour composition course for advanced students, or students who have already attained a level of first-year writing proficiency. In many respects, English 108 is similar to English 106; however it emphasizes a more rigorous approach with higher expectations on your ability to work more quickly and more independently. To meet all the goals of this course, you should expect to produce approximately 8,000 words of polished writing or the equivalent. Some of this text production may be done using multimedia, and some of it may be given through short assignments. Your writing topics may include personal experiences as well as research-based arguments. You may also be asked to write on topics that are related to your major field of study.

what can i expect?

ARE ALL INTRODUCTORY COMPOSITION CLASSES THE SAME?

The theme or approach your English class takes may differ from the class of someone you know, but all of your instructors are meeting the same goals and you should expect more similarities than differences. Here's what you can generally expect:

I. Course Policies

- Your instructor will provide you with a course syllabus and policy statement that contains information about required texts and materials, office hours, paper or project format requirements, and attendance policies. It is up to you to read these documents, to ask questions if any of them are unclear to you, and to abide by the policies that your instructor has established.
- Your instructor will make every effort to return your papers and assignments within a reasonable time frame. They will offer comments about the strengths and weaknesses of your work and may suggest that you revise and resubmit a paper if it doesn't meet the assignment goals. They may also recommend that you seek specific help from the Writing Lab or make additional appointments with them to confer about your progress in the class.
- Your instructor will hold a minimum of one office hour each week, during which you can discuss your work or receive individual help. Under some circumstances, your instructor may make alternative appointments for you if you have classes during their regularly scheduled office hours.
- Your instructor will hold classes regularly, announce any class cancellations in advance when possible, and have someone post a cancellation notice in the classroom in case of illness or an emergency. If your instructor is absent and there is no notice posted, you can check with the English Department Office (324 Heavilon Hall).

II. Grade Guidelines

- Each instructor will establish specific grading policies. Although your instructor may use plus and minus grades on your individual assignments, you should remember that Purdue does not use plus or minus grades on your final grade report. So, even if you do consistent B+ work, your final grade will be reported as a B.

how will i be graded?

- Your instructor’s policy statement should explain his or her grading procedures, how much you are expected to read and write, how much each assignment will count toward your final grade, and what other factors (e.g., exercises, Writing Lab work, class participation, attendance, submission of late work, etc.) enter into your grade. But as a general rule, you can expect all instructors to evaluate your work based on the following:

A An “A” indicates work of exceptional quality. “A” work addresses the assignment thoroughly, appropriately, and insightfully. It is sophisticated in content, structure, syntax, and diction; conforms to appropriate genre conventions of grammar, mechanics, and usage; and makes use of appropriate citation styles required by academic research.

B A “B” indicates work of above average quality. “B” work addresses the assignment thoroughly and appropriately. It is clearly focused and demonstrates sound structure, appropriately varied syntax, and uses diction suitable for the assignment. It, too, conforms to appropriate genre conventions of grammar, mechanics, usage, and citation.

C A “C” indicates satisfactory completion of the assignment. “C” work may need significant improvement to meet the goals of the assignment. Since the revision process is an important key to stronger writing, the identifiable and appropriate focus may need improvement. It may be less clearly structured and written as well as relatively free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage. It may not meet appropriate genre or academic research conventions.

D A “D” indicates unsatisfactory, yet passing, work. “D” work lacks the strength necessary for successfully completing the task. That may include failure to address the assignment, unclear focus, confusing structure, simplistic or flawed syntax and diction, and/or numerous errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

F An “F” indicates failing work. “F” work may fail to address the assignment, may lack focus, may suffer from organizational deficiencies, and/or contain significant errors in syntax and diction. Often numerous errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage show a lack of revision and proofreading. Failure to come to class or do the required work is frequently the reason for failure.

III. Academic Honesty

what else should i know?

- Most instructors will spend class time discussing the best ways to acknowledge material from other sources and the necessary formats for citing them. When using outside materials in the course of your research or writing, you must acknowledge them properly. Not doing so results in plagiarism, which is using the ideas, expressions, or words of another person without crediting them.

- We take your academic integrity seriously, and so should you. As a writer and student at Purdue, you are cautioned against (1) using, without acknowledgment, word for word phrases, sentences, or paragraphs from the printed or electronic manuscript material of others; (2) using only slight changes of the materials of another; and (3) using the general plan, the main headings, or a rewritten form of someone else’s materials. These guidelines

apply to the work of fellow students as well as the published work of professional writers or information found on the Internet. Penalties for plagiarism are serious and are clearly stated on the Office of the Dean of Students Web site (<http://www.purdue.edu/ODOS/administration/integrity.htm>).

WHAT IF I WANT MORE HELP WITH OR RESOURCES FOR MY COMPOSITION CLASS?

During the semester, your instructors may recommend additional conference times or resources if they think you could benefit from more (or different) help with writing. However, you don't have to wait for someone to recommend these additional resources to take advantage of them:

◆ **The Writing Lab**

The Writing Lab (located at 226 Heavilon Hall) offers a variety of writing resources for all students and teachers at Purdue, including half-hour tutorials, workshops, handouts and books, public use computers, a collection of tapes and software for writers of English as a Second Language (ESL), and an interminable supply of animal crackers. Many of these resources can be accessed from their Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>. For more information, call 494-3723.

◆ **The Digital Learning Collaboratory (DLC)**

The DLC (located in the lower level of Hicks Undergraduate Library) offers an active learning environment with a number of resources that you can access to help create your multimedia projects. As a student, you can check out equipment, use the high-speed Macs and PCs, learn new software, or reserve space to work collaboratively on a class project. For more information, go to <http://www.lib.purdue.edu>, send e-mail to DLC@purdue.edu, or call 494-3751.

◆ **Adaptive Programs**

The Adaptive Programs division of the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) can arrange for assistance, auxiliary aids, or related services if you think a temporary or permanent disability might prevent you from gaining access to departmental or university resources listed above. Contact them at 494-1247 or <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/> with any individual concerns.

WHAT IF PROBLEMS ARISE DURING THE COURSE?

Be sure to see your instructor if you have problems with your work, have questions about assignments, want to discuss a specific grade, need help understanding a particular procedure, or need help catching up after an illness. ICAP instructors are carefully chosen for their ability to help you become a better writer and their willingness to be as helpful as possible.

If you want to talk with someone else about your composition course or instructor, or if you have a problem that you and your instructor can't resolve, be sure to make an appointment with your instructor's mentor or with the program director: for English 106, 106R, 108, 108R see **Professor Shirley Rose**, the Director of Composition (Heavilon Hall 302, 494-3730); for English 106I see **Professor Tony Silva** (Heavilon Hall 433, 494-3769).