



## The Do-It-Yourself Consultation

Certain times of the semester are very busy at the Writing Resources Center (WRC). If you have a paper you want help with and can't get an appointment, or you just want to improve your revision skills, here are some tips:

1. Read the paper aloud. We do this at the WRC because it forces the reader to look at sentence structure and flow. We all make typos and grammar mistakes, and simply reading the paper out loud will help you catch them. Have a friend listen to or read it to catch any mistakes you are unsure of.
2. Although the WRC can help with grammar, our consultations focus primarily on your paper's argument and structure. If asked what your thesis is, would you be able to answer quickly? If so, make sure your thesis is worded effectively. If not, don't get upset. Just calmly try to organize your thoughts. Slow down and find what unifies your paper. If you find a unifying idea but other information isn't relevant, take the extra stuff out. It might be hard to cut out ideas you worked hard to write, but it is much easier to communicate an idea that is organized. All you need is a coherent thesis, and everything else follows from there.
3. Look at each paragraph individually. Many people like to have paragraphs that flow into each other, but it is easier to think of each paragraph as its own distinct unit. If you can go through paragraphs and assign a specific topic to each one, you're doing great. Keep in mind that the first sentence of a paragraph is usually a topic sentence. It's as useful to the reader as it is to the writer, so make sure to include a purpose in the topic sentence. Once you know the purpose of that paragraph, the rest of the paragraph is evidence and analysis. Then you need to remember to connect the paragraph back to the thesis to make your paper easier to read. Go to each paragraph; ask yourself "What is this paragraph's purpose? How does it support my thesis?"
4. Make sure your paper has a concluding paragraph. Your conclusion should feel more developed than your introduction because you have discovered more about your argument along the way.
5. After you have made changes to your body paragraphs and conclusion, return to your introduction to make sure it introduces the paper you have actually written. Does it hook the reader in the first sentence? Does it provide adequate background information to prepare the reader for your paper? Does it state the thesis clearly and succinctly?
6. If you make consistent grammar errors, you can use one of our grammar handouts located in the WRC or on our website. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) is also a good source for grammar guidance ([owl.purdue.edu](http://owl.purdue.edu)). Or ask a friend.
7. If you are having citation problems, feel free to look at the MLA, APA or Chicago handbooks we have for student use here in the WRC. The Purdue OWL also has very useful information about different citation styles. If you have a specific question, we suggest that you ask a professor because individual professors have different requirements.

