

Writing Anxiety: Causes, Cycles, and Strategies

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Why this presentation?

“**A Rationale for Writing across the Curriculum**” by Richard Bullock, author of *The St. Martin’s Manual for Writing in the Disciplines*:

Learning is an active process...

Writing is a powerful tool...

Writing is a component of the
academy in general and
specific disciplines. (72-73)



We believe that some writing should be a component
of every course at AVC.

Why this topic?

- Research-based
- Observations from the Writing Center
- Feedback from faculty
- Math anxiety course in place (1 / 2 unit)
- Writing anxiety course in place (1 unit) two years and counting
- Results and findings



Writing:

The Last Language Skill We Learn



What is writing anxiety?

- Definition
- Symptoms
- Causes
- Cycle:

Causes lead to

negative thinking

which leads to

anxiety and bad feelings

which lead to

writing avoidance and lack
of writing success

which lead to

negative thinking

“And so the cycle continues”



(Arem 18)

Writing Center tutors are trained to

**Recognize
Symptoms**



**Express
Empathy**



**Refer to
Resources**



**Encourage the
use of positive
self-talk**

My skills will improve each time I write.

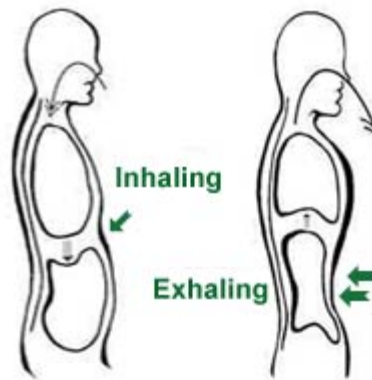
Writing will help me achieve my goal to pass this class.

Writing is a process of discovering what I have to say about a topic.

Stopping the Negative Cycle:

Strategies used by faculty learning specialists

- Obstacles journal
- Writing history and Daly-Miller Test
- Breathing techniques
- Music therapy
- Positive statement posters



Help students think like a writer



Myths:

1. To write, you must have a natural talent.
2. To write, you must be inspired.
3. Before you start, you must know what you want to say.
4. When you write, your words and sentences should always come out correctly.
5. To be a good writer, you have to always like to write.
6. To be a good writer, you have to devote lots of time to writing.
7. To be a good writer, you always must have a free flow of ideas.
8. To be a good writer, you must always be able to write easily and effortlessly.
9. To be a good writer, you must not be anxious.

Realities:

Writing is a learned skill.

Inspiration comes with writing.

The act of writing is one of discovery.

Revision is a given.

Writing can be agonizing.

Writing can be done in chunks.

Ideas do not always flow.

Always writing easily and effortlessly is a beautiful fantasy.

Some anxiety actually helps you to perform better and think more clearly.



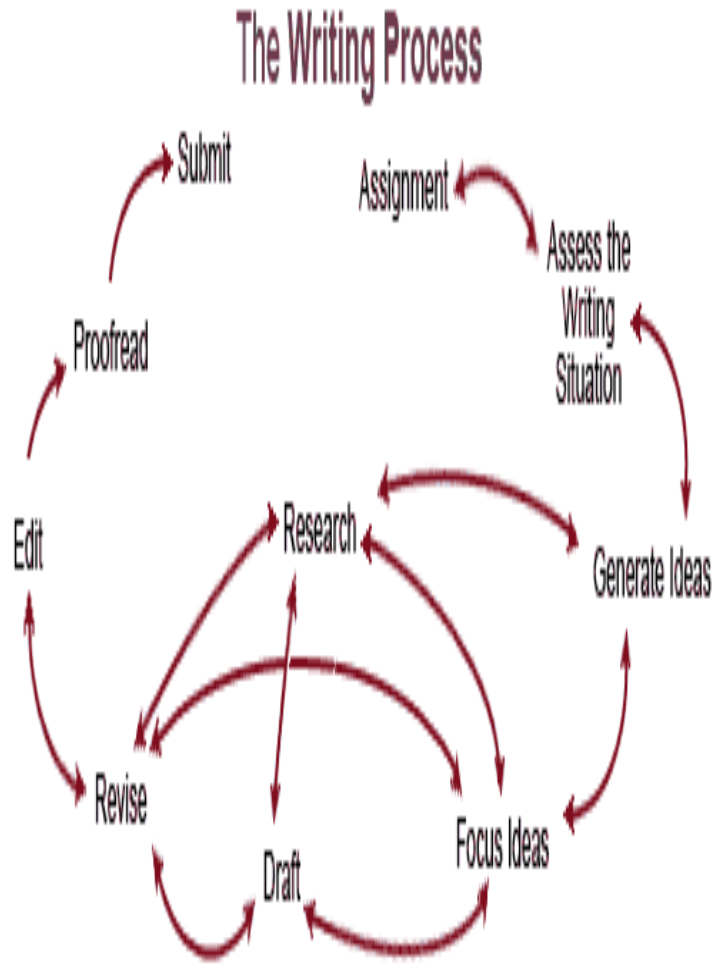
(Arem 48-49)

Help students understand that
writing is a process

The Writing Process



Writing as a process involves



- active reading of the writing assignment
- prewriting to discover what you have to say about the topic
- conducting pre-research, depending on the purpose for writing
- deciding on a focus, a thesis
- more research to search for evidence
- drafting ideas and integrating evidence
- citing sources
- revising global concerns in the paper
- editing for local concerns
- proofreading before submitting the paper

Practical Strategies to Improve Writing:



Complete a Learning Styles Survey



Complete a Study Environment Inventory



Use visual aids



Visualize Success



Write every day

More practical strategies

- Understand what is expected for college writing

<http://www.avc.edu/student-services/lc//writing/>

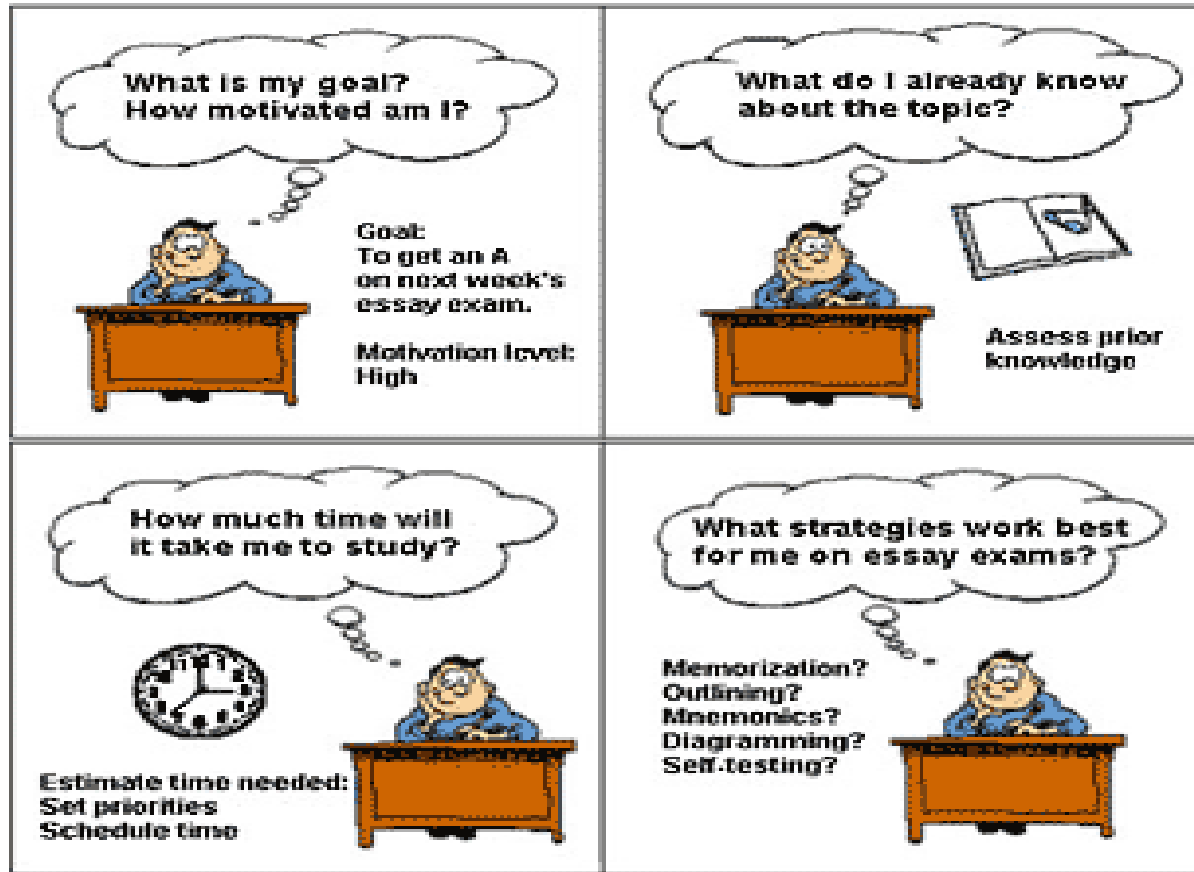
- Choose an English class wisely
- Know how to participate in a tutoring session
- Schedule writing assignments
- Avoid plagiarism
- Learn tips for taking essay exams



Metacognition and Self-Regulation

Summary compiled by Carol Ormand, SERC.

<http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/metacognition/introduction.html>



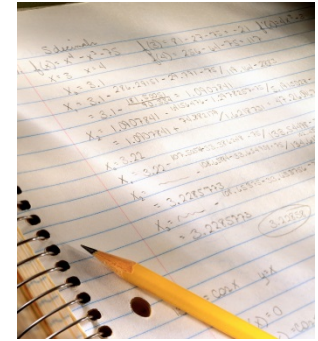
<http://www.avc.edu/student-services/lc>

Give students the opportunity to write every class period to decrease anxiety:

Ungraded assignments may include

- journal entries
- informal writing assignments (ex. five-minute writings)
- brainstorming on paper
- making lists
- creating textual aids (ex. cubing, diagramming, mapping, timelines)
- annotating handouts, summarizing texts
- writing questions on index cards
- using heuristics (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)
- self-assessments, inventories, surveys

Note: Most, if not all, of these in-class activities can occur within the context of the subject content.

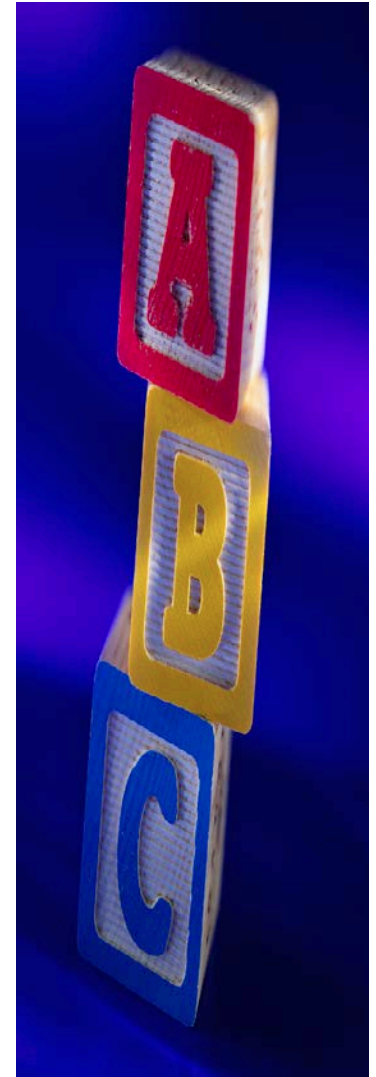


Why making time for writing in class can be advantageous to you and your students:

- Writing helps students learn material better...
- You have the opportunity to examine your courses critically...

Activity:

1. Choose a course you teach and list the course content.
2. Go over your list and label each item (A for crucial, B for very important, C for important or useful).
3. For each C item, estimate the minutes you spend in class covering it. Consider how you could use some of that time for writing activities to aid students' understanding of crucial and very important material.



Good study skills + writing opportunities =
Success with less stress

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzVRLKIVjs4>



Questions??????

Works Cited

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Articles of interest

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Reigstad, Thomas J. "Perspectives on Anxiety and the Basic Writer: Research, Evaluation, Instruction." *Journal of Basic Writing*. Spring 1985. 68-77. Print.