

MIT STUDENT WRITING AND SPEAKING SELF-ASSESSMENT

The MIT Communication Requirement stemmed partly from alumni feedback. MIT alumni consistently report that expertise in communication principles and practices—in other words, knowing how to write and speak clearly and compellingly in both formal and informal situations—is essential to their careers after MIT. A majority of MIT alumni report that they wish they had dedicated more of their own time and effort to learning how to argue effectively with evidence, how to write and speak with grace and style, and how to assess and provide for the needs of their various audiences.

As an undergraduate now in a CI subject, you have the opportunity to learn from their experience and to take charge of your own communication education, which begins by assessing your knowledge and abilities, and then setting specific goals for the semester. As you move through the communication requirement, you can keep adding new or more advanced goals, so that by the time you graduate, you will have learned how to write and speak as a professional in your field.

1. Name _____ Date Dec. 9, 2010 _____
2. Your year: First year Sophomore Junior Senior Your Course: undesignated _____
3. Subject ESG 21W.732 _____

4. Did you take the FEE?

YES

NO

If "YES," please list any specific advice about your writing that you remember:

5. Is this the first CI subject you have taken at MIT?

YES

NO If "NO," please list the other CI subject(s) you have taken: _____

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: WRITING FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND PURPOSES

6. From the following statements, select all that are true for you.

I have always enjoyed writing and seek opportunities to write for different purposes.

I believe that writing helps me to develop stronger ideas and to explore complex issues in academic work.

I have sufficient experience and knowledge about writing in this subject.

I have no strong feelings about writing, neither seeking nor avoiding it.

I find writing to be easy in some subjects and harder in others.

I generally understand the principles for academic writing, but want to learn more about writing in this subject.

I haven't given much thought to writing in different situations; I just write the same way in each subject.

I have mostly avoided writing, and subjects that involve writing.

I often feel unclear about the principles and purposes for writing in this subject, or in most subjects.

Adapted from the Writer's Personal Profile developed by Tracy Ann Robinson for the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. For more information about the tool and best practices for using it, please visit http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/assessment/robinson_burton.cfm.

7. Which kinds of writing are you most comfortable producing? (select as many as you like)

- Personal writing (personal essays; first-person, factual narratives; journals, etc.)
- Essay exams
- Creative writing (fiction, poetry, etc)
- Technical writing
- Blogs
- Factual reports
- Lab reports
- Literary analysis
- Summaries or overviews of a reading or topic (literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, etc.)
- Longer, synthetic arguments drawing on many sources
- Proposals

8. What, specifically, do you consider strengths in your writing?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: APPROACH TO DRAFTING AND REVISION

9. For each of the following aspects of the academic writing process, mark whether you consider your knowledge and abilities **STRONG (S)**, **WEAK (W)**, or **NEUTRAL (N)** in that area.

- Choosing an appropriate and workable topic
- Locating and evaluating sources
- Analyzing sources in detail and deepening your own interpretations
- Developing a focused, arguable thesis claim
- Organizing the information and ideas, and structuring them in a logical sequence
- Generating the first draft of your paper
- Writing the introduction and/or conclusion
- Sticking to the topic; identifying and omitting extraneous information
- Moving beyond the surface or the obvious claims to a more rigorous argument
- Creating smooth, logical transitions between paragraphs and sections
- Incorporating and citing sources in your text
- Revising your draft for logic, structure, and development after instructor, peer, and/or self review
- Editing your draft for syntax, clarity, and professional presentation
- Using an appropriate tone, writing style, and level of complexity for your target audience
- Establishing and maintaining a writing schedule that gives you enough time to produce your best paper

10. In your academic studies (and/or other areas of your life), how often do you use informal writing as part of your thinking/learning process?

ALWAYS

FREQUENTLY

OCCASIONALLY

NEVER

11. What kinds of informal writing activities have you found helpful for clarifying your thoughts and integrating new information and concepts as you develop your ideas for a draft?

- Summarizing ideas from lectures or readings
- Writing out your own reflections and responses to readings or lecture material
- Writing critical questions and exploratory answers about the material as you read
- Writing definitions of key concepts in your own words
- Keeping a general journal for recording thoughts and ideas
- Free writing on the topic before you begin formal writing
- Brainstorming notes in an informal outline, mind map, or cluster diagram
- Writing a formal outline
- Talking out your questions and ideas with a classmate or friend

12. Briefly describe your typical approach to writing a first draft (what do you do? How long do you spend on it?)

13. Briefly describe your typical approach to revising drafts of your writing.

14. What kind(s) of feedback from peers or instructors do you find most useful?

- Comments on my use of evidence and understanding of the content
- Comments on my thesis, original ideas, and insights about the material
- Questions that ask me to clarify what I mean in specific passages
- Questions that raise issues I hadn't yet considered, or considered fully
- Comments about the form or structure of my essay
- Positive comments about what's working well
- Critiques of what's not clear, accurate, or well-developed
- Specific suggestions for further development
- Editing marks on my syntax, grammar, and punctuation

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: SPEAKING ABILITIES AND RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE

15. With which of the following academic speaking forms do you feel comfortable:

- Speaking actively and often in full-class discussion
- Raising questions about materials or ideas in class
- Speaking collaboratively in small groups to negotiate ideas and solve problems
- Debating informally in class discussion when there are differences in interpretation
- Debating formally with assigned or chosen positions
- Presenting informally on a reading or topic
- Presenting formally on your research
- Providing feedback to other students on papers or presentations

16. From the following statements, select all that are true for you.

- I have always enjoyed speaking in public and seek opportunities for public speaking.
- I believe that articulating my ideas helps me to develop stronger ideas and to explore complex issues.
- I have sufficient experience and knowledge about formal speaking in this subject.
- When I speak, I consider my audience and purpose.
- I have no strong feelings about speaking, neither seeking nor avoiding it.
- I speak primarily to communicate ideas that I already understand.
- I say what I think, whatever the audience.
- I have never given formal speaking much thought.
- I have mostly avoided public speaking, and don't find it easy.
- I often feel unclear about the principles and purposes for public speaking in this subject, or in most subjects.

SETTING PERSONAL WRITING AND SPEAKING GOALS FOR YOUR CI SUBJECT

Think about the kinds of writing and speaking you expect to do as a professional after graduation. Next, think about any gaps that exist between your current repertoire of writing and speaking skills and those needed by professionals in your field. To close these gaps, what needs to change about your writing and speaking?

The goals you choose should be *rhetorically based*, *specific*, and *realistic* (i.e., achievable). Thus, goals such as "ace this course" (not rhetoric-based), "get better at writing" (too general), and "produce grammatically flawless first drafts" (probably not realistic) are inappropriate for this exercise. **List your goals here:**

Writing:

1. _____
2. _____

Speaking:

1. _____
2. _____

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21W.732 / ESG.21W732 Science Writing and New Media
Fall 2010

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