

Tips for Multilingual Speakers/Writers



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Learning to write well in English is a challenging, ongoing process. As you practice, you will inevitably make errors. Don't be afraid of them. Welcome them, study them, and learn from them. Take risks and try out new words and expressions.

Writing a Paper in English

Academic writing in the United States is "thesis-driven." In other words, for nearly every paper you write, you will be expected to defend a **thesis**, a single sentence that summarizes your main point and reveals your unique perspective on the topic. If you are uncertain about writing thesis statements, get help from the Writing Center or someone in your program.

As you begin your assignments, make sure you understand them well. Professors in the United States usually welcome contact with their students. Don't be afraid to approach them after class or schedule appointments with them. Ask lots of questions.

Make use of tools such as a bilingual dictionary and an ESL grammar and guidebook.

Once you begin writing, keep your sentences short. Most American professors prefer a simple style rather than one that is formal or repeats the same ideas over and over. A simple style means you are less likely to make grammar errors—and more likely to hold your reader's interest.

If you have trouble expressing a thought in writing, try speaking it out loud, perhaps to someone else. You may then find it easier to write your idea.

Read drafts of your papers aloud. You will hear mistakes that you might not see on the page. A roommate or friend who is a native speaker of English can help point out errors.

Becoming a Better Writer of English

Read as much as you can in English from many different sources, such as newspapers, magazines, and books. Ask friends to recommend good novels to read. Listen to American radio. As you absorb the English language, you will find that certain English rules, styles, conventions, and idioms begin to take up residence in your brain. When you pick up a pen to write, you will have a more intuitive knowledge of the correct forms.

Keep in mind that your knowledge of other languages is an asset. Understanding more than one language and culture gives you a broad perspective. You have many experiences to think about and to write about.

Acknowledgements

Information for this brochure was adapted from: "Writing in North American Higher Education: A Primer for International Students." The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University. 2 April 2009.
<<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/resource/683/01/>>.

Accessing More Information

Make use of all the resources you can. Here are a few good ones:

- The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu> provides information about English grammar and mechanics, and also offers practice exercises.
- Karin's ESL Partyland for ESL Students and Teachers at www.eslpartyland.com offers opportunities to read and write English with other ESL students on the Internet. It features quizzes, a chat room, and much more.
- Raimes, Ann. *Keys for Writers*. 5th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008. This is an

excellent guide to writing academic papers, and it is available in the Hamline bookstore. Note especially Section 9, written for ESL students.

Where to Find Help on Campus

Consultants at the **Hamline University Writing Center**, located in the basement of Bush Library, are eager to help you with all stages of your writing. We will work with you whether you have just received an assignment and have no idea how to begin or you have a finished draft and want help with revisions.

You can make appointments online at WC Online. Simply follow the instructions at:

<http://rich37.com/hamline>

We look forward to seeing you!