Successful student writers can:

**Develop a thesis...**

Express judgments
- Evaluate a variety of positions
- Articulate a position
- Recognize the complexity of an issue
- Respond to counterarguments (for persuasive writing)

Focus on the topic
- Focus on a specific issue beyond general statements
- Identify the controversial aspects of an issue (for persuasive writing)

**Support a thesis...**

Develop a position
- Explain and support a position through logical reasoning
- Support statements with specific reasons, examples, evidence, and details

Organize ideas
- Group and sequence ideas in a logical way
- Use transitional devices to make logical connections between ideas
- Craft an effective introduction, body, and conclusion

**Use language with purpose...**

Use language effectively and correctly
- Use a variety of sentence structures to enhance meaning
- Carefully select the right words for the message
- Observe the conventions of standard written English

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_Ideas for the Classroom_

Ideas collected from a variety of classrooms and include suggestions from The Ohio State University Center for the Study of Teaching and Writing and The Writing Across the Curriculum website from Richmond University.
When you want students to reflect...

Focused Freewriting

- What made the most sense to you today?
- What did you understand the least?
- What points in the reading are the most/least important/convincing/arguable? (depending on subject matter)
- Of what value is this knowledge?

How Would You...

Write an answer to a “How would you…” question.

“…evaluate the evidence used?”
“…describe the tone of the passage?”
“…apply this concept to a real world situation?”

Assignment Paraphrase

Ask students to write a 3-4 sentence paraphrase of an assignment you’ve just given and what they’re supposed to demonstrate in completing that assignment.

Provide feedback by using a number of 1-3 on a rubric based on one of the traits from our Writing with Wolves document. For example, “support statements with specific reasons, examples, evidence, and details.”

1. Does not make a clear statement
2. Makes a statement without offering reasons or details
3. Makes a clear statement that has support and details

When you want students to apply...

Silent Discussion

Write an idea/passage/quote/concept/philosophy at the top of pieces of chart paper posted around the space. The silent discussion takes place in three rounds. There is no talking until round three. (1) Write your thoughts about each. (2) Read the thoughts of others and support/refute with evidence. (3) In small groups (one for each piece of chart paper) synthesize the thinking of the group into a one or two sentences statement. Report out to large group.

Response or “Position” Papers

Have students write a short response paper to an assigned reading, a film, or an issue that comes up in discussion. These response papers are most effective if the class itself is the audience. The main objective of the assignment is not to “perform” (i.e., to prove a thesis statement about the reading) but rather to formulate a response to a work and share it with the class. Not surprisingly, you will find that students who write such responses are more prepared for discussion and more engaged with the material.

I’ll Use This When...

Ask students to write three ways they will use/apply a concept they have just learned in your class, or three ways they see the concept in the “real world.”

Provide feedback by having students trade papers and write a one sentence response to their partners’ writings.
**When you want students to predict...**

**What’s That Mean?**

For a lesson with specialized vocabulary, give students 3-7 key words and ask them to predict the meaning before the instruction. To close the lesson, have students, in pairs, correct or confirm their predicted definitions.

**I Still Wonder**

For a unit that spans multiple days, ask students to write one or two questions they still have about the previous days’ discussion. At the end of the hour or unit, have students answer those questions. Trade papers with a partner to see if there are any unanswered questions.

These activities provide inherent feedback by having students collaborate with a partner to confirm or correct information at the conclusion of the lesson.

Consider having students compose their questions at the end of the hour and collect them. Provide feedback by addressing those questions at the beginning of the next lesson.

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**When you want students to process...**

**So What?** Answer all three questions after a new concept

“I’m thinking…”

“In other words…”

“This also makes me think of…”

**Sentence/Passage Notation**

Note a particular sentence or short passage from reading. Write it at the top of the page. Explain why you found it noteworthy.

**Pass a Problem**

Have students write out a theoretical or practical problem that a new concept might help to solve. Pass it to another student whose job it is to answer/respond.

**Believing/Doubting**

Students write in support of an idea/concept/methodology/thesis, then in opposition to it.

Provide feedback by asking students to trade papers with a partner. The partner either answers/solves the problem (from pass the problem), identifies the answers to the three questions by marking them with a 1, 2, 3 to show they are there (from so what?) or writes a statement in response (to sentence/passage notation or believing/doubting).
**When you want students to summarize...**

*Key-Word Summary*

Choose six key words from a reading/lesson/chapter. Ask students to summarize using those key words, highlighting them as they go.

*Dinner Conversation*

Write the answer to the question your parents will ask you at dinner tonight. “So, what did you learn in X today?”

*Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?*

Imagine you had to teach this concept/idea/theory to a 5th grader. What would you say?

Provide feedback by using a number of 1-3 on a rubric based on one of the traits from our Writing with Wolves document. For example, “group and sequence ideas in a logical way.”

1. Random collection of thoughts
2. Thoughts and ideas cover the message but seem somewhat out of order
3. Sequences the main ideas in a logical way that covers the subject

**When you want students to question...**

*Round the World Exploration*

Have students write a statement they would like to know more about around a topic for the day. Pass papers around a circle or the room for students to write a clarifying or probing question about the statement. At the end of the lesson, students can see how many questions they can answer.

*Passing Notes in Class*

Passing notes provides an opportunity for students to identify, interrogate, and develop things they did and did not understand about the content of the course. At the beginning of class, ask every student to write a note to another student in the class inquiring about some aspect of the course about which they are unclear. Run class as normal but periodically ask students to pass notes back and forth to each other as class continues. (Have students sign the notes and explain that you will review them for completeness and whether they are on topic.) Near the end of the period, ask them what issues came up as they were writing and if anyone was able to respond to their questions correctly. As a group, you may be able to resolve some of their concerns. Alternatively, read over the notes so you can integrate their concerns into later course content.

Note: This idea can also incorporate a technology component such as Today’s Meet (http://todaysmeet.com) as a backchannel forum for students to pose and answer questions during a discussion.