

ENG 101 Learning Outcomes

Illinois State University Writing Program

www.isuwriting.com

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The Illinois State University Writing Program has developed these Learning Outcomes to explain what you can expect to learn when you take ENG 101 at Illinois State. Each ENG 101¹ class is unique, because each ENG 101 instructor designs his/her course individually (with input from the Writing Program); however, all of our instructors match up their courses to these Learning Outcomes, so you will encounter a similar list of terms and concepts as you work your way through the projects in the course.

The list below outlines the key activities, skills, and knowledge that you can gain in the course. That doesn't mean this list of outcomes covers everything you'll learn as a student in ENG 101.

Program Assessment: In addition to the assessment of your work in your specific class, the Writing Program regularly engages in program-wide assessments. We use a whole range of different kinds of research and reviews of student work that help us better understand what students are learning, and to help us improve our teaching practices. As a student in ENG 101 during a particular semester, you may be expected to complete assessment work as part of the regular work of your ENG 101 class.

Learning Outcome #1

Writing Research Identity: Living and Writing in the World

Short Version: Students will learn to understand and articulate how learning new skills and ideas affects their thinking and behavior as writers. Students will use knowledge gained in all of the other 7 learning outcome areas to demonstrate this ability.

What this Outcome Means: Being a successful writer in different settings requires more than just learning specific skills, like where to put a comma or how to write a thesis statement. A successful writer must also to use their knowledge flexibly in different situations, and must also be able to determine when new skills and knowledge are required. Building a "writing research identity" means you are able to think beyond just acquiring skills and begin to understand how all of your skills (and the skills you haven't yet acquired) change what you can and can't do as a writer. For this outcome, you'll be assessed on your ability to do the following things:

- Understand and articulate what skills and knowledge you do and don't have that might be useful in a particular writing situation.

¹ **NOTE:** The learning outcomes for ENG 145 courses are consistent with 101 outcomes, with a more intensive focus on disciplinary and professional writing, and an understanding that more advanced students can make significantly more in-depth progress on these learning outcomes.

- Understand and articulate skills you need to work on when you approach new writing situations.
- Understand generally how your knowledge about writing shapes you as a writer.
- Understand specifically how your existing knowledge (or lack of knowledge) can create limitations in your ability to engage in different kinds of writing (a key skill for becoming stronger as a writer).
- Understand how your knowledge and expertise can be adapted successfully to different writing situations.

Skills & Activities:

- You will practice identifying and assessing your own writing skills. This will include reviewing how you managed to learn the skills you already possess, as well as identifying skills you still need to learn.
- You'll work to map out how your existing and to-be-acquired skills will help you successfully engage with new kinds of writing (in the class and in your future writing life).
- You'll work to identify all of the ways you are already a writing researcher and to better understand how your experiences have shaped you as a writer and as a researcher.
- You'll be asked to think about your attitudes about writing and about the learning you need to do in new writing situations.

The Backstory: Research in Writing Studies, Education and Literacy Studies indicates people create fairly strong “writing identities” that shape how they learn (and even what they are able to learn) about new writing situations. The more flexible your knowledge of your writing skills is, the more likely you'll be to be able to successfully learn different kinds of writing. In our program, we try to help writers think about their identity as writers and researchers. Understanding your own experiences and the ways these experiences have shaped you can help you better understand how to use the writing research skills we offer.

Learning Outcome #2

Peer and Self-Assessment: Learning to Assess What's Working and What isn't Working

Short Version: Students will learn to assess their own and others' writing productions, to provide specific and accurate evidence to document the successes and problems in their writing productions, and also offer this kind of evidence-based assessment to their peers.

What this Outcome Means: Learning this skill is the way to make all the other skills you learn in ENG 101 useful. If you can't learn to use evidence from your own practice and from your genre research to assess your own productions and other people's productions, then everything you learn in each new writing setting becomes tacit (meaning you know it, but don't know how or why you know it). This is a problem, because this “tacit,” invisible knowledge can be a cause problems when you're learning new and different kinds of writing. Tacit knowledge can keep you from learning necessary new skills, and can even cause you to use skills that are inappropriate in a new setting. So for writers working in lots of different kinds of writing settings and genres,

tacit = unsuccessful. Therefore, in order for you to be a successful 101 student, we'll expect you to be able to do the following:

- Complete evidence-based self-assessments of your learning (you should be able to explain what you learned and how, and also be able to identify the specific ways you used your knowledge in your productions).
- Complete evidence-based self-assessments of your own productions. We don't expect students to be able to create perfect versions of all the texts they produce in ENG 101. We do, however, expect all students to be able to assess the texts they produce, using the skills they've learned in the class.
- Complete peer-assessments that demonstrate your ability to do genre research and activity theory analysis, and use these skills to assess a production.

Skills & Activities:

- You will engage in both peer and self-assessments throughout the semester, and you'll discuss how these activities shape your understanding of what you've learned and what you know.
- Your ability to accurately assess your strengths and weaknesses (both in your work as a writer and in your genre productions) will be an important component of the grade you receive in the course.

The Backstory: Research has long shown that learning to self assess and peer assess writing can help writers become more proficient. In our program, we've also learned that the ability to self-assess our own productions using writing research skills is one of the best ways make these writing research skills routine. While some of the writing we do every day doesn't need our conscious application of these skills, making these skills part of our regular thinking can make them more accessible when we need them, even, sometimes, unconsciously. We use self-assessment as a way to remind ourselves of what we're learning, and we also use this kind of assessment in a practical way, to test whether our ability to evaluate our writing is accurate enough to be useful as we learn to write in new genres and new writing situations.

Learning Outcome #3

All About Genres: Exploring, Researching and Analyzing Genres

Short Version: Students will learn to identify key features of genres, use specific techniques for studying and analyzing genres (genre studies and cultural-historical activity theory – CHAT), and produce texts with clear explanations of how genre conventions have been adhered to, modified, or even resisted in a particular production.

What this Outcome Means:

- By the end of the semester, we'll expect you to be able to identify key features of genres (using genre studies and cultural-historical activity theory techniques).
- We'll expect you to understand the techniques of genre research, and how such research might apply to practical work to create a genre you haven't composed before.
- We'll expect you to be able to complete genre research for a genre you want to compose, and then discuss clearly the choices you've made as you composed.

- We'll expect you to be able to produce different genres of text (including multimodal work) and discuss how these texts work (within and against) different genre conventions.

Skills & Activities: In your time in ENG 101, you will hear the word “genre” often, because it’s related to many activities in the course:

- You’ll study a range of different genres, including academic, workplace, and social genres. You won’t necessarily produce all the different kinds of genres you study, but you’ll learn to use methods for studying genres that can help you to learn how to compose different kinds of writing as you encounter them.
- You’ll do genre research. Genre research means to deliberately study a genre (or genres) to fully understand all of the important aspects of how/why a text is produced in a certain way in certain settings, and over time in different settings.
- You’ll apply these techniques in practical ways to do a range of different writing. This work won’t just be to produce the genres themselves. You’ll need to be able to show that you’ve learned to use the research techniques and that you can identify how you arrived at the decisions you made about the production, and how the result does (and doesn’t) match up with your goals.

The Backstory: Our program uses the study of genres as a key part of our learning. This means we don’t agree with the idea that “writing” is something you can teach (or learn) by writing just one kind of text (like school essays, for example). Instead, we focus on looking at all the different kinds of texts that are produced, and at how a specific writer’s skills need to change and adapt to meet these diverse writing needs. When we talk about a writing research identity, we mean that learning to employ these techniques in practical ways can change the kind of writer you are. If you can build a strong writing research identity (through learning these techniques and practicing them), you can prepare yourself to improve your writing in different situations over time. This doesn’t mean you’ll always choose to conform to the “rules” of writing a particular kind of text; it means you’ll learn to understand and evaluate what the conventions of a particular genre in a particular setting are, and to analyze choices you might make to conform to, expand on, resist, or disrupt these conventions.

Learning Outcome #4

Researching your Content: How to find and Evaluate Information and Cite what You Know

Short Version: Students will learn to identify effective information seeking behaviors for a range of research situations. These include skills for finding information, evaluating sources for validity and usefulness, documenting and citing sources, and learning to research literate activity.

What this Outcome Means:

- In our partnership with Milner Library, we’ve identified a range of different kinds of researching activities successful researchers need to be able to employ. You won’t necessarily be able to use all of these skills with equal fluency by the end of the

semester. We will, however, expect you to show your ability to navigate a range of different kinds of research environments with both skill and “critical engagement” (which means you need to be able to decide if/when/how different kinds of research sources can be useful). Critical engagement with research skills will include all of the following types of research activities:

- **Finding Information:** Can you find a range of different resources using different Milner library tools and tools for general web searching? Can you organize that information so as to keep track of it and quickly evaluate what you might use and what you can’t use?
- **Evaluating Information:** This is a deeper process of looking at different kind of materials you collect when you are researching and determining if the source can be used.
- **Documenting and Citing Resources:** You’ll be expected to know about the different ways different genres cite research and evidence. Academic citation will be a part of this work, and you’ll also be expected to attend to how non-academic sources are cited.

Skills & Activities: We have created a full list the different types of research activities we’d like you to be able to complete successfully as you move through ENG 101. These activities include the following areas:

- **Finding Information:** There are specific skills you can employ (such as learning to navigate the Milner library resources to find materials) as you use both online and physical library resources. While each researcher develops their own patterns for doing research, we’ll expect you to engage in thoughtful, thorough research and be able to document your process for thinking through where and how to find information.
- **Evaluating Information:** Once you find information, it’s critical you be able to decide whether the information can be useful for the kind of writing you are doing. Determining the accuracy, relevance, and validity of information you’ve found will be a skill you’ll explore, as well as learning to evaluate the appropriateness of specific information for the topics and genres you’re producing.
- **Skills for Documenting and Citing Information:** Once you’ve found information you want to use in the genres you’ll be producing, you’ll also be exploring how to document and cite these sources in the texts you produce.
- **Working with Milner Library Tools:** Milner library has created a range of resources. Throughout the semester, you’ll work with these resources to help you gain both proficiency and critical-thinking skills related to research practices.

The Backstory: Our Writing Program works closely with the faculty at Milner Library to determine both the practical research skills you’ll need as a student at Illinois State University, as well as the kinds of “thinking and creating” skills you’ll need as a “citizen researcher²” who must find and evaluate a wide range of information on a daily basis. Therefore, in both ENG 101 and your COM 110 course, you’ll practice these skills. You will learn about academic forms of

² We use the term “citizen researcher” because people often think of the word “researcher” as belonging only to people with specialized education and/or knowledge. We believe all people engaged in literate activities can and already do engage in writing research.

citation, and you'll also learn how research is documented in a range of different kinds of genres and writing/communication situations.

Learning Outcome #5

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory: CHATting about Literate Activity (and Other Terms & Concepts)

Short Version: Students will be expected to demonstrate familiarity with the terms of *Cultural-Historical Activity Theory*³ and other important terms and concepts – this specifically includes your ability to use Activity Theory and other concepts as a practical writing research tools for making decisions about new genres and writing situations.

What this Outcome Means: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory is a framework for investigating complex writing situations. Students in ENG 101 will learn the basics of this theory, and more importantly, they'll learn how to use activity theory and other concepts to investigate genres in real-world situations (including academic situations). The goal of these investigations is to help the writer make and execute plans for producing texts and evaluating the resulting productions. We expect students to be able to do the following:

- To be able to use at least some of these terms accurately in your discussions about your writing research.
- To be able to use these terms as part of your writing research activity -- the practical things you do as a writer – to understand what to do and what to produce in particular writing situations.

Skills & Activities:

- *The Grassroots Writing Research Journal* is the best tool we have for helping you understand how CHAT works, and how it can be useful to you in a practical way as a writing researcher. As you read both the articles in the print issue of the journal and some of the archived articles in the journal (which are available online), you'll begin to see these articles illustrate how citizen writing researchers (all of us) can learn to study literate activity and make practical use of our knowledge as we live and write.
- In addition to reading *Grassroots* articles, you'll discuss these terms and concepts in class, and you'll be expected to use them to demonstrate your learning throughout the semester.
- We'll also explore other terms used by researchers and scholars in the fields of Education, Writing Studies, and Literacy Studies that can help you understand the activities and thinking people engage in when they write.

The Backstory: Our program has developed a specific list of terms that have helped us understand how we can explore what happens when people write and when they learn to write in new ways. You'll definitely be working with all of the terms on our list, as well as others in

³ *Re-situating and Re-mediating the Cannons: A Cultural-historical Remapping of Rhetorical Activity: A Collaborative Webtext.* With Paul Prior, Janine Solberg, Patrick Berry, Hannah Bellwar, Bill Chewning, Karen Lunsford, Liz Rohan, Kevin Roozen, Mary Sheridan-Rabideau, Jody Shipka and Derek Van Ittersum (2007). *Kairos*, 11.3, May 2007.
<http://computersandcomposition.osu.edu/awards/digital.htm>

your class. You will be using the terms to understand how writing works, and as you move into new writing experiences beyond 101, we hope understanding and using some of these terms will help you see the writing you do in new ways -- ways that can help you adapt and improve your skills as you encounter new writing.

Learning Outcome #6

Uptake and Antecedent Knowledge: Documenting Knowing and Learning

Short Version: Students will be expected document knowledge in new writing situations by clearly articulating how existing knowledge and skills have adapted and changed over the course of a new writing experience.

What this Outcome Means: This outcome is very connected to Outcome #1 (Writing Research Identity). We include it as a separate outcome, because it's one of the specific skills writers need to learn in order to be more aware of (and in control of) their identities as writers and researchers. "Uptake" refers to the way that individuals incorporate new knowledge – and this is important because each individual's uptake is completely unique. Learning to be conscious of uptake can be challenging, but it's a skill that can really impact learning and improvement for writers. "Antecedent knowledge" refers to how the stuff you already know (both consciously and unconsciously) specifically impacts you as you're learning new kinds of writing. These two skills, combined, are absolutely critical for the work that you do to learn in this course. You'll be asked to demonstrate that you know how to keep track of what you're learning and keep track of how your knowledge is transforming and adapting to new writing situations. We'll expect you to be able to do the following:

- Understand the concepts of uptake and antecedent knowledge and be able to consider how these concepts impact your learning when you are writing in new situations.
- Articulate clearly how your existing knowledge and skills have adapted and changed over the course of a new writing experience.
- Demonstrate the ability to specifically discuss how you are "taking up" new skills and concepts in the course.
- Use your genre research skills to document how your writing productions represent both the knowledge you've gained about the genre(s) involved, and the specific adaptation of your existing skills.

Skills & Activities:

- You'll work with a wide range of what we call "uptake genres", which are texts and activities that help you document what you are learning and how that learning is being applied in the writing you are producing.
- You'll use various tools and activities to remember and document what you already know about writing and how that knowledge is transforming as you apply it in new situations.

The Backstory: It's a critical skill for you to learn how to document your uptake of new skills and concepts and your antecedent knowledge, specifically how this knowledge is being applied

(or not) in a new writing situation. Recent research in Writing Studies⁴ documents that the different ways people make use of their existing knowledge and adapt and use new knowledge has a large impact on how successfully they can work with new genres and writing situations. So our focus on these skills is actually one of the most important tools for a writer (you), who will absolutely encounter many new kinds of writing during the course of your writing life.

Learning Outcome #7

(Multi)media and (Multi)Modalities: The Forms, Structures, Tools and Modes of Writing

Short Version: Students will be expected to demonstrate skill at moving content between different modes and media.

What this Outcome Means: Exploring a range of genres will give students experience with many different kinds of texts. We also specifically focus on the changes that happen when we produce content in different modes. Visual, Aural, Tactile and Alphanumeric texts all have particular affordances (they let make meaning in different ways for different audiences). In addition, in our digital age, texts that can be viewed online (video, images, hypertexts, etc.) are becoming ever more important ways of communication. As a result, we'll expect you to be able to do the following:

- Work with at least one or more alternate modes of production -- especially visual and aural modes.
- Demonstrate that you understand how these modes can shape and impact communications (especially in comparison to producing only print-based texts like essays).
- Use your writing research skills to clearly articulate your choices in producing multimedia or multimodal texts.

Skills & Activities:

- You will be given the opportunity to explore digital/visual/aural/oral genres and productions throughout the semester.
- You will be given the opportunity to produce digital/visual/aural/oral genres for at least one of the projects during the semester.

The Backstory: Our program believes it's important to explore types of writing well beyond the traditional modalities of writing classes (which often involve mostly writing or typing text). We know the world is no longer made up primarily of print-based essays any more, even in school. That means writing researchers need to be able to choose among the range of possible modes of production (both digital and material modes), and choose and learn to use the tools necessary for these kinds of productions. While we can't expose all students to all the possible range of genres and productions, we can (and we will) give you the chance to think beyond the

⁴ For example, Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi. Composition Knowledge to Negotiate New Writing Contexts in First-Year Tracing Discursive Resources: How Students Use Prior Genre Knowledge in New Writing Situations. *Written Communication* 2011 28: 312.

print essay in ENG 101, and we'll expect you to take advantage of these opportunities to expand your knowledge.

Learning Outcome #8

Cultural and Ethical Impacts: Translingual and Cultural Studies Approaches to Thinking about Writing

Short Version: Students will be expected to demonstrate the ability to consider the implications of diverse cultural and linguistic influences on the activities of textual production and use, and to produce texts that are responsive to these issues within particular contexts.

What this Outcome Means: Even when we use genre studies and activity theory to complicate our understanding of how writing happens, we are still often restricted by our life, language and writing experiences. We can't envision or understand the texts we produce outside of our existing knowledge and experience – we have a hard time imagining how they might move around and how people with diverse language and cultural experiences might take them up. In a vast, changing, inter-connected world, these limitations in our understanding can damage our ability to produce effective texts of various kinds. We want your ability to consider alternate views of your productions to grow during your time in ENG 101. As a result of your experiences in the course, we'll expect you to be able to do the following:

- Examine a production you or someone else has created and consider how variations in language and culture and writing experience may have shaped how that text was produced or how it may be taken up by others.
- Apply your skills in thinking about cultural/linguistic implications to alter a production in appropriate ways.
- Compare your own experiences in writing (and how that experience has shaped your literate activity and writing research identity) with the experiences and products of others -- to define an ultimate quality of text, and to understand and explain the ways that writing experience writes itself into the literate activities of diverse individuals and groups of people.
- To respect and adapt to diverse language situations and incorporate this respectfulness into both the ways you produce texts and the ways you take up and use the texts of others.

Skills & Activities:

- You will be given the opportunity to explore texts with approaches that account for different cultural and linguistic perspectives.
- You will be given the opportunity to examine the trajectories of texts as they move across cultural and geographical boundaries.
- You will be taught skills for mapping out the implications of textual productions as they are taken up in multiple geographical, linguistic and cultural settings.

The Backstory: Our experiences as people (and as writers) tend to build up into what we understand, consciously, as a “single-story”⁵ of how we write and how writing works. We learn to think, “this is the way it’s done,” which means we then don’t question those practices. It also means we learn to evaluate others based on their ability or willingness to “do it the way it should be done.” The learning outcomes 1-7 are all kinds of learning that can help us deepen and complicate the stories we can tell about writing -- because that complexity can make us better writers. In the case of linguistic and cultural differences in what writing looks like or the way it happens, a single-story about writing can not only be incorrect, it can work against our writing goals in some serious ways, as well as making our co-existence as humans less rich and complete. Therefore, in ENG 101, we work to uncover these multiple perspectives and use them to make ethical choices about what and how to write in specific situations.

⁵ In thinking about this learning outcome, it might be useful to consider this TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on “The Danger of a Single Story.”

http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en