Live, One-to-One Tutoring Sessions

Writing tutors are also available for live, on-demand sessions or to address asynchronous question submissions. Live tutors are available for extensive hours of the day and night to assist students with specific writing questions, such as pre-writing techniques, research strategies, documentation, and grammar and mechanics. Students can also submit an offline question at any time, and responses are generally received within 24 hours.

HERE’S AN EXAMPLE OF A LIVE, DROP-IN TUTORIAL SESSION

Using Smarthinking’s proprietary virtual whiteboard, our writing tutor (in red) helps a student (in black) develop the thesis for a writing assignment. Note how the tutor guides the student through the process.

HELPFUL WRITING RESOURCES

In addition to live writing assistance and the Writing Center options, Smarthinking provides students with access to the Smarthinking Writer’s Handbook, the ESL Writer’s Handbook, and a Study Guide Handbook. These tools can be helpful to students as they complete their coursework, and tutors often direct students to sections of the handbook for additional information and support.

writing is fundamental

PREPARE STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND WITH COMPREHENSIVE ONLINE TUTORING FOR WRITING

According to a survey of employers conducted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 25 percent of college-educated workers entering the workforce lack a basic knowledge of writing and written communications.

To improve their writing skills in the classroom and prepare them to meet the needs of employers, students require convenient and continuous access to personalized instruction. Smarthinking’s Online Tutoring for Writing is designed to make secondary, post-secondary, and graduate students better and more confident writers. With access to expert writing educators, students can utilize live, on-demand tutoring sessions or asynchronous question submissions for specific targeted support. Through Smarthinking’s comprehensive Writing Center, students receive a detailed, personalized critique of any written assignment, such as an essay, research paper, paragraph, résumé, or creative work.

With experienced tutors who have reviewed millions of essays for students of all ages and skill levels, Smarthinking’s writing support can play a central role in strengthening student writing, supporting instructors who have challenging workloads, and improving overall student success rates.

RESEARCH BASED, RESEARCH PROVEN

Independent research proves that Smarthinking’s online tutoring services increase student achievement and help improve student retention. With Smarthinking, students get higher grades, pass their classes, and stay enrolled.

INFORMATIVE DATA ON STUDENT PROGRESS

With Smarthinking, administrators are only a click away from accessing data on student use of the Smarthinking service, including the records of actual student sessions, writing submissions, and guidance provided. This data can be valuable in assessing student progress and success. An archive of live sessions, offline questions, and paper reviews is also available to students.

Source: Broward College, Enterprise Business Intelligence, Research Brief
SPECIALIZED SUPPORT, PERSONALIZED FEEDBACK

Every aspect of Smarthinking’s Online Tutoring Services for Writing is designed to provide individual instruction to students. Our service assists students with a wide variety of applications, including report and essay review, remediation, graduate-level thesis critique, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), developmental education, résumé and cover letters, and GED® programs.

Smarthinking’s live tutoring sessions are conducted one-to-one within our proprietary virtual whiteboard environment, which provides real-time collaboration. Students can brainstorm with a tutor about their assignment, get help with grammar or documentation, or discuss feedback provided by a tutor or instructor. In the Writing Center, students can submit essays and other written work for personalized, detailed critique and feedback, with a response usually within 24 hours.

EXPERIENCED TUTORS

Over 90 percent of Smarthinking’s writing tutors have an M.A. or Ph.D. degree in their writing-intensive discipline. Most are current or former instructors and all are experienced, screened tutors and teachers who receive ongoing professional development. With the aid of trained, experienced writing tutors available around the clock, clients can utilize Smarthinking as they might a teaching assistant, saving them valuable time.

The Writing Center

Smarthinking’s tutors review various types of written pieces, and provide constructive criticism and feedback students need to improve the way they write. Students may choose to receive this critique from a tutor with expertise in creative writing, business/technical writing, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), depending on the assignment and the student. Writing review services include the following options:

STANDARD ESSAY REVIEW - Smarthinking’s standard essay critique prioritizes higher-order concerns, including main idea/thesis, content development, organization, and introduction/ conclusion. This critique includes a tutor’s embedded comments and a response form with commentary on essay strengths, areas in need of improvement, and a summary of next steps.

LONG ESSAY REVIEW - The long essay review provides the same individualized feedback as the standard review, but applied to written pieces of greater length.

PARAGRAPH REVIEW - The paragraph review provides the same individualized feedback as the standard essay review, but applied to a writing piece of 300 words or less.

GRAMMAR & DOCUMENTATION REVIEW - The Lower-Order Concerns-only essay addresses exclusively lower-order issues of grammar and mechanics, sentence structure, word choice, and documentation. Revision advice is provided without editing or proofreading student work.

RÉSUMÉ & COVER LETTER REVIEW - Smarthinking critiques résumés and cover letters, which gives job applicants and students detailed feedback that can be critical as they seek employment. Key areas of focus include purpose/focus, content development, organization, grammar & mechanics, sentence structure, and word choice.

DETAILED FEEDBACK HELPS STUDENTS STRENGTHEN WRITING SKILLS

The Writing Center sample below presents a tutor’s global feedback in response to a student’s submission. This feedback provides suggestions for how to revise the three highest priority areas of assistance in the student’s writing. Tutors also embed comments in the student’s submission to pinpoint areas that need attention and revision.

STRENGTHS OF THE ESSAY:

Hello, Kate. Welcome back to Smarthinking. This is Tom, and I’m glad to work with you on another draft of this essay. You’re making some great improvements here, particularly in the development of your third paragraph and in the elimination of some of the comma splices that were a problem in your first draft. I encourage you to keep up the good work I’ve included my comments here and in your essay. Be sure to look there, too.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT:

Kate, I think your main goal during revision will be to decide just exactly what critical point you want to make about Butler’s writing. I see that you want to focus on the death rituals of Vietnam and Butler’s character Dao; however, I don’t see what point you want to make about these topics. Try to rework your thesis statement so that it answers the following questions: what do I want to prove or show to my readers about the death ritual in Butler’s story? What opinion do I have about Butler’s use of the death ritual in the story? Then, make sure your body paragraphs address and develop these questions, using both examples from the text and your discussion and analysis of these examples. You will find more specific content development suggestions embedded in your essay.

ORGANIZATION:

Currently, some of your paragraphs summarize the story, while other paragraphs give us information about Vietnamese tradition. We can’t be sure what the relationship is between these two topics. By revisiting your thesis statement, you will give your essay a more clear-cut organizational structure. The first portion of your essay’s body may examine the use of the death ritual in Vietnamese tradition, the next part of your essay’s body may look at Butler’s use of the ritual in his story, and the final portion of your essay’s body may include information about your opinion of Butler’s use of the death ritual in the story.

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS:

Kate, as I mentioned above, you’ve done a good job of eliminating comma splices, but I see you’re still having some trouble with commas. I wanted to remind you to check for comma errors by reading your writing aloud. Commas sound like pauses, as you can tell from reading this sentence aloud: If you read the following sentence aloud, can you hear which comma might be unnecessary?

In “A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain,” Robert Olen Butler tells the story of an old Vietnamese gentleman as he is departing this life and entering the next.

As you probably can hear, the comma after Butler sounds unnatural. Note: sometimes it is difficult to “hear” all of these pauses, so it is important to know the rules.

For more information about comma usage, take a look at the section on commas in our online handbook.

SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS:

As you work on your next draft,
• Determine a clear thesis statement that tells us exactly what point you want to make about these topics. Make sure that each body paragraph is working to support your thesis.
• Use your thesis as a “road map” for the organization of your essay.
• Read aloud to listen for missing or extra commas.
• Feel free to submit your next draft to us if you’d like more help!

For more information about writing, grammar, and usage, visit the Smarthinking Writer’s Handbook or the Smarthinking ESL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Writer’s Handbook. Thank you for visiting Smarthinking. I enjoyed working with you again today, Kate. Please stop back again soon!

Tom
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