

## Teaching Writing Philosophy

### Introduction

Written communication marked the beginning of our modern culture, and it continues to be a vital skill, even in an era of 180-character and TikTok videos—perhaps especially in this era, some might argue. While the language of memes, hashtags, and social media has earned its place in written culture, it does not replace the writing called for in academic or professional circles, nor does it replace the need for teachers of this field. I have a deep passion for an expertly-worded sentence or perfectly-argued thesis that I hope to impart to as many of students as possible. Yet for all my personal passion, I also know that writing is a dreaded subject for many students. **As a writing teacher, my goal is to make what I teach both informative and accessible, arming my students with the skills and confidence to successfully write in any environment.** To do this, I underscore to my students the particulars of writing for different audiences or purposes and expose them to different kinds of writing; I incorporate fun or gamification into my curriculum wherever possible; and, I remain abreast of developments in the field by continuing my training and education as both a writer and teacher.

### Audience Awareness

The ultimate goal of any writer is that their message be understood by those they are addressing. To do this, one must know one's audience and write specifically to or for that group. As Paltridge argues, writers must understand the “underlying views, assumptions, and aims” of the specific field for which they are writing—merely adhering to general linguistic rules is not enough to be a clear communicator (400). Writing takes place in myriad environments, and we as teachers must do our best to prepare our students for the settings in which they will one day be writing. To this end, I will stress the importance of audience awareness in my classroom. One way to do this is to advise students to think of different kinds of writing as “genres.” Future instructors may want writing that is laced with jargon and demonstrates clear command of rhetorical principles; a future employer, however, will likely expect documents with plain and clear language. Teaching students to write with their audience in mind and not some mythic “gold standard” will prepare them for successful communication in any arena.

### Gamifying the Classroom

One of the most popular teaching trends of this century is gamification. As defined by Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, and Nacke, gamification is when digital game mechanics are used in non-game environments, thereby enhancing students' engagement with the material (qtd. in Lam et al. 101). While it might seem an obvious conclusion that enhanced engagement in a topic will result in improved retention, the fun that is the result of a gamification approach is also vital to both maintaining students' attention *and* creating a classroom environment where students want to learn. In a study of gamification techniques in a secondary school English class, Lam et al. found that gamification was both a motivating factor for students and improved their focus on the writing topic (105, 107). While gamification in this study did not actually improve students' writing abilities, there is undoubtedly a place for it in the classroom. Learning writing should be an enjoyable process, and providing students with opportunities for fun and improved motivation and focus is vital, especially in today's post-Zoom and -pandemic world.

### Continual Self-Improvement and -Teaching

The final component of my teaching philosophy is to acknowledge that teachers are not infallible. As noted by Duta and Rafaila, education “no longer provid[es] a package of knowledge and skills to serve a

person for life” (801). Graduate-level coursework and certifications are typically necessary for one to even begin teaching at any level of education, but the teacher’s own learning should not stop there. Educators need to be lifelong learners, as most believe it both develops their own knowledge and further develops the teaching profession as a whole (Duta & Rafaila, 802, 805). I wholeheartedly agree with this stance and am committed to continual improvement of both my knowledge of writing and my practice of teaching: through online courses, conferences, certifications, and even simple conversation with other writing educators, I strive to be a lifelong student of teaching writing.

## References

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