



**Thomas Jefferson University  
East Falls Campus  
Academic Success Center**

**Frequently Asked Questions – Student Edition**

**Who are the writing tutors?**

The writing tutors are all professional, rather than peer, tutors. This means that they have at least a master’s degree in a writing-intensive discipline, and have experience teaching and tutoring students at the collegiate level.

**When and where are the writing appointments?**

East Falls writing appointments are either 30 or 60 minutes long, and can take place between 9am – 8pm Monday through Thursday, and 9am – 5pm on Fridays in the Academic Success Center (located in Haggart Hall). We also have tutoring appointments available on the weekends in the Rena Rowan Reading Room on the second floor of Gutman Library from noon – 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

**Can I meet with a writing tutor online?**

Yes! In addition to our in-person appointments, we also offer online tutoring via Zoom video conferencing, as well as written feedback sent via email. More information about online tutoring can be found in the “Instructions for Online Writing Assistance” document on our website.

**Are walk-in appointments available?**

Writing tutoring is only available by appointment; we do not have any regular drop-in hours. However, you can check our availability in Starfish, give us a call, or stop by our office to see if we have any immediate availability. If you do stop by the Academic Success Center to see if you can meet with a writing tutor, we will work with you if there is an available appointment at that time. This is very unlikely to be the case, however, after midterms.

**How do I make an appointment?**

You can self-schedule in-person appointments via Starfish. If you have any issues self-scheduling, you can email [Tutoring@Jefferson.edu](mailto:Tutoring@Jefferson.edu) or call 215-951-2799 during business hours. For online appointments, you should email [Tutoring@Jefferson.edu](mailto:Tutoring@Jefferson.edu) with your availability for a Zoom appointment at least one day before your desired appointment time, or if you would like written feedback you should upload your paper through the link on our website. More information about scheduling online appointments can be found in the “Instructions for Online Writing Assistance” document on our website.

## **Do I need to have written my paper before I can meet with a writing tutor?**

You can come in for writing tutoring at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming/outlining to final revisions. In fact, we encourage you to come in earlier rather than later, so that we can help you get off to a good start and not have to end up completely starting over because you might have misunderstood the assignment, for example.

## **What should I bring to a writing appointment?**

You should bring the assignment prompt and anything you have written so far. You can also bring in any prior feedback you have received from your professor, so that your tutor has a better sense of your professor's priorities and expectations.

Either print or electronic copies are fine, although if you rely on electronic files, you should download any cloud-based documents to prevent any WiFi connectivity issues from interfering with the appointment, and ensure that you have the charger for your laptop so it doesn't lose its battery charge during the session. We do not have printers available for you to use in our building, so if you plan to use paper copies you should print them out before coming to Haggar Hall.

## **What happens in a tutoring session?**

At the beginning of a tutoring session, the writing tutor will ask you questions about the assignment and any concerns you have. After this brief conversation, the tutor will establish with you an agenda for how to use the remaining time.

While this agenda can give your tutor a starting point, it must also be flexible and adaptive to any concerns your tutor identifies during their reading, or any new questions you think of as the session progresses.

During the last five minutes of the session, your tutor will return to the agenda, and if there are items that weren't discussed, your tutor will check and see if you would like to schedule an additional appointment to follow-up. The tutor will also recommend some next steps that you should take to apply what was discussed during the session.

At the end of your tutor's shift, they will enter into Starfish a summary of the session, which will be emailed to you.

## **I won't be able to make it to my appointment. How do I cancel?**

To ensure that we are able to see as many students as possible, we ask that you cancel your appointment as soon as you know you won't be able to make it. To cancel your in-person appointment:

- Log in to Starfish
- Click the three little horizontal white lines in the top left corner
- Click the "Upcoming" tab on the sidebar menu that appeared

- You should see any scheduled upcoming appointments you have. In the bottom right corner of the appointment you wish to cancel, you should see three little dots. Click on it and select “Cancel appointment.”
- A pop-up menu will appear, asking you to confirm the cancellation. You may provide a reason for your cancellation if you wish, but you are not required to do so.
- You will receive an email to your Jefferson account confirming that the appointment has been cancelled.

If you have an online appointment that you won't be able to make, or if you run into any issues with cancelling your appointment through Starfish, email [Tutoring@Jefferson.edu](mailto:Tutoring@Jefferson.edu) to cancel your appointment as soon as possible.

### **What happens if I forget to show up for my appointment, and I didn't cancel it?**

After two no-shows, you will receive a warning email from the Assistant Director of Writing Services. After three no-shows, you may have your online scheduling privileges revoked, so we can make sure that appointments are available for the students who will show up for them. This may seem harsh, but we need to make sure we serve as many students as possible. Every appointment you make that you don't show up for is potentially an appointment that another student might have taken.

### **What happens if I show up late to my appointment?**

If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to a 30-minute tutoring session or 20 minutes late to a 60-minute tutoring session you will be marked as a “no-show” in Starfish and will not be seen by a tutor. If you still wish to meet with a tutor, you will have to reschedule for another date and time. Students who arrive late habitually may have their tutoring privileges revoked for the duration of the semester.

### **Is there a limit to how many times I can come in for writing tutoring?**

Your cap for writing tutoring is two hours per week, with no more than one hour of writing tutoring per day (receiving tutoring in other subject areas does not count towards this cap—each subject has its own two-hour limit). However, we do make exceptions to this policy from time to time, so if you believe you will need more writing help than this, please reach out to the Assistant Director of Writing Services to discuss your particular circumstances.

## **Are there any limits on the length of papers for in-person or online tutoring sessions?**

Although we do not set a hard limit on the number of pages allowed, we generally can't discuss more than 5 double-spaced pages in a 30-minute appointment, or 10 double-spaced pages in a 60-minute appointment. We strongly recommend that if you are working on a large, ongoing project (like a capstone or thesis) you should bring only one section at a time and meet with your tutor frequently. Every semester we have a few students who try to receive feedback on their entire thesis a day or two before it's due, and are disappointed with the 5 – 10 pages of feedback we are usually able to provide.

## **Can I meet with the same tutor on a regular basis?**

Yes. If you would like to regularly meet with the same tutor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, please reach out to the Assistant Director of Writing Services for help with arranging this. We highly recommend recurring meetings for multilingual writers who want to work on grammar, as well as any students working on a larger writing project like a capstone or thesis.

## **I met with a writing tutor, but I didn't receive a better grade than I had on my last paper. Why didn't I receive a higher grade?**

This situation can happen for several different reasons:

- 1) Writing tutoring is an educational conversation about writing. It is not the same as submitting a manuscript to an editor who will "fix" the writing. You still need to do the work of revising your writing after the session is over. This is why it's important to try to schedule your appointments far enough in advance of your due date so you have time to make the necessary revisions, and even return for a follow-up appointment as needed. The best advice in the world only helps if it's actually followed.
- 2) You didn't understand the tutor's feedback. You might need to meet with a different tutor who can explain things in a different way, or become more willing to ask questions when you don't understand. Tutors, of course, should also use techniques to encourage you to ask questions, and give you opportunities to test your understanding during a session, so we certainly welcome any feedback from you about the quality of tutoring you received, which can be used for our tutors' professional development. They can't get better without constructive feedback from you!
- 3) You didn't bring in your assignment description, rubric, and, if available, your professor's prior feedback. Without this information, the tutors are not able to adapt their feedback to your unique writing context, which makes it much less effective. While there are commonalities across professors and across disciplines, each discipline (and each professor within that discipline) can have unique expectations. The more information you provide your tutor, the more likely that their feedback will help you be successful in your specific context.

- 4) Your writing *did* get better, just not a lot better. You may need to modify your expectations regarding how much progress is realistic to expect from one tutoring session. This is especially important if you struggle with grammar, or there are many layers of writing challenges to address. In these cases, you should arrange to meet regularly with a writing tutor. As much as we all enjoy a dramatic makeover, small, incremental progress is much more realistic; after a semester of regular, dedicated tutoring (and independent work on your part to implement the feedback you receive), I can guarantee that your writing will show improvement.

### **I'm working on writing a journal article for publication. Can a tutor at the ASC help me with that?**

While our tutors are experienced writers, and several of them are also published writers, we encourage students writing for publication to reach out to the Office for Professional Writing, Publishing, and Communication housed in Scott Memorial Library at the Center City campus.

That office exclusively works with faculty and students who are writing for publication or preparing to present in a professional/academic context. However, if you are currently working on something for class that you hope to *eventually* publish, you should work with the ASC tutors until the class has ended. Once you're ready to start preparing your manuscript for publication (and not for a professor's grade), *then* you can reach out to the Office for Professional Writing, Publishing, and Communication for further support.