11 "I Passed First-Year Writing—What Now?": Adapting Strategies from First-Year Writing to Writing in the Disciplines

Amy Cicchino

Overview

This chapter foreshadows challenges you can experience as you adapt your writing beyond your first-year writing course to become a writer in your discipline.[1] The essay contains a student scenario, defines key rhetorical concepts within discipline-specific writing situations, and gives you strategies for adapting these rhetorical concepts to new writing situations. After reading this chapter, you will better understand how the concepts introduced in first-year writing connect to the writing you will encounter in your upper-level, disciplinary courses and identify strategies that will help you intentionally adapt writing knowledge to new discipline-specific contexts.

Introduction

"C minus?!" Angel was stunned. Angel was not a C- student; they had always done well in writing courses in the past and had just earned an "A" in Composition II last semester. Yet, while looking at their grade for their first writing assignment in BIO 2030, they began to doubt their ability.

Professor Smith introduced the assignment six weeks ago, and it seemed simple enough: each student would create a scientific poster on a series of lab experiments they had completed on the culturable microbes they had found in dirt samples. The assignment sheet told students to create a poster for a scientific audience with complete sections and a polished design.

Sure, Angel hadn't started the assignment until a few days before it was due, but the professor hadn't asked to see drafts before the final due date.

Angel brought up the poster when they went to lunch with their friend, Akeelah, who was also in the class. "How did you do on the poster project?" Angel asked.

"Okay," Akeelah said absentmindedly.

"What is okay?" Angel pried.

"B minus," Akeelah said, putting down her phone and turning her attention more towards Angel, who was obviously concerned about the assignment, "Why?"

"I got a C minus," Angel admitted, "I'm a good writer. I don't understand what Prof. Smith wants from me."

"Have you thought about asking?" Akeelah posed, "You can go and talk to her during office hours. That's what I did. It was weird at first, but I felt a lot better afterwards."

Angel shrugged, they hated having awkward conversations with professors, "Can't I just see your poster?"

Akeelah paused, "I'll show you my poster, but only after you talk with Prof. Smith." Angel sighed and opened their email; they began an email asking Prof. Smith to come and discuss the grade during office hours. Angel needed to know what they could do better for the next assignment.

A few days later, Angel sat with Prof. Smith in office hours. Prof. Smith explained why Angel had earned the C-. She said Angel wasn't writing in a way that was effective for scientists or for the purpose of the assignment. The sentences were too wordy, the writing style was not appropriate for scientific readers, some expected poster sections were missing, and the conclusion only summarized without making specific recommendations for the scientific community. Prof. Smith did not see the conventions she expected to see in scientific posters: a presentation of findings and data using relevant graphs or images, an evaluation of methods and processes, and specific recommendations based on data. Instead, she argued, Angel had written the poster as if it were an essay. Angel was confused, "Was the writing they had done in their composition class less good than the writing they were doing now?"

"Not less good," Prof. Smith said, "but *different* in its purpose, audience, style, and form."

Prof. Smith then asked Angel what they had done to prepare for the assignment: Had they looked at example scientific posters? Had they researched scientific writing styles? Had they arranged to meet with another classmate to look over drafts? Had they taken their writing to the writing center for feedback? Prof. Smith had talked about these steps when the poster assignment was introduced. Angel struggled to remember that class

day—it was a long day, and they had felt overloaded with all the information they had received. Together Prof. Smith and Angel logged into Canvas, their course learning management system, and located the course syllabus. They downloaded and opened the file—Angel was guilty that they hadn't thought to do that while completing the poster. Sure enough, there was a section of the syllabus devoted to resources on scientific writing (Kinsley's 2009 *A Student Handbook for Writing in Biology, 3rd edition* and Weaver et al.'s *Scientific Posters: A Learner's Guide*) and even links to example scientific posters by former students.

Angel had used writing strategies that had worked well for them in the past: they had participated in class activities and done every bit of the homework. When they were ready to start the poster, they had outlined their ideas into sections, written in complete and engaging sentences, and cited their sources in MLA. They had moved their written sections onto a poster and added a visual. However, they hadn't done enough to consider this new writing context, its new expectations, and the more independent responsibility they would have to take on as a writer. Being asked to write in new forms for new audiences demanded Angel adapt their writing strategies.

Before we move on, let's look at the posters created by Angel and Akleelah. What differences do you notice? Table 1 summarizes several differences as well.

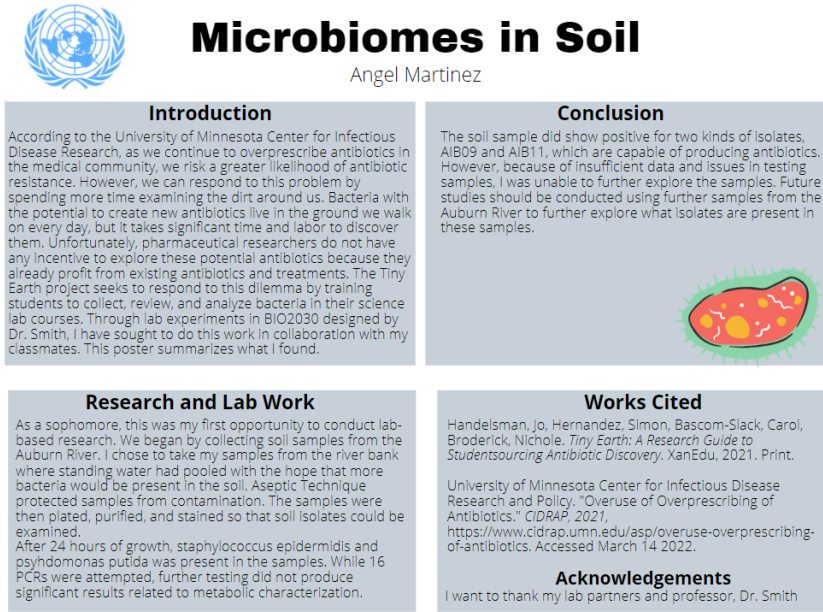

Figure 1: Angel's scientific poster, mock examples created by the author. This poster has a lengthy introduction with an attention grabber to start. The research

and lab work section discusses the student's experience in the lab, not the scientific methods or lab processes. The conclusion offers a quick summary of the points already explored. Research is cited in MLA format, and the only visual is a microbe cartoon.

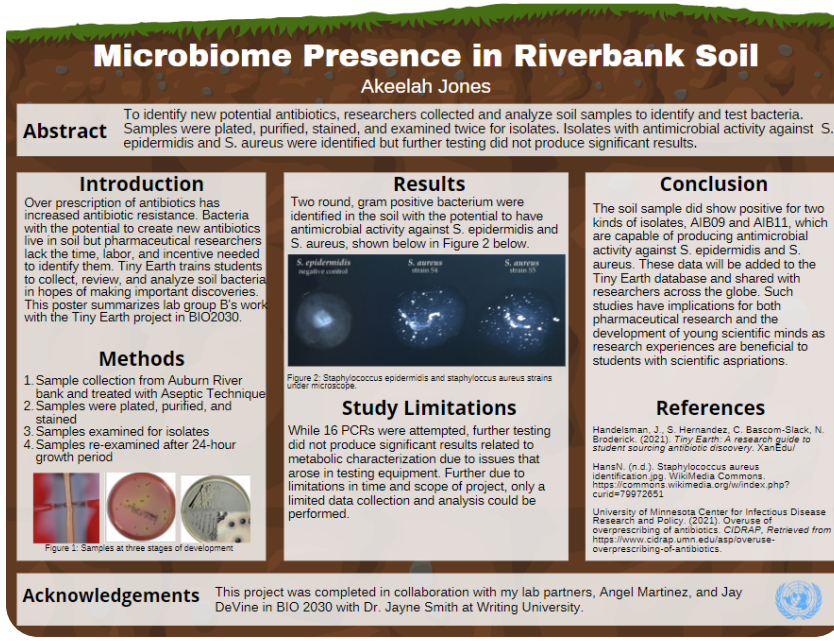

Figure 2: Akeelah's scientific poster, mock examples created by the author. This poster starts with an abstract. Its introduction is short, offering brief context for the project. The methods are a simple list that focuses on scientific lab processes and includes a figure showing the three stages of development. The results also include a single takeaway with an image showing the antimicrobial activity in its microscopic form. There is a section on limitations. The conclusion offers a brief summary and calls for the Tiny Earth project to be continued to promote pharmaceutical research among young scientists. References are in APA format.

Angel's challenge isn't uncommon for students as they move into their discipline-specific courses (also called courses in the major). Angel's composition professor had taught them the importance of audience, purpose, and genre, and they had been successful applying those concepts in their composition course. However, it was more difficult for Angel to apply those concepts and manage their writing process in this new discipline-specific course. Prof. Smith expected Angel to do the work of learning about writing within the scientific community and the genre of a scientific poster

more independently. Prof. Smith also didn't provide checkpoints in draft development like Angel's composition professor had, making it easy for Angel to wait to begin the project until just before it was due.

Table 1

A comparison between Angel's and Akeelah's posters

	Angel's Poster	Akeelah's Poster
Style/ Word Choice	Uses "I" language, narrative style, and lengthy transitions to elaborate on the topic. MLA format	Uses more concise scientific language with tightly focused paragraphs. APA format
Organization	Emphasizes the introduction and conclusion sections as being the most important while methods focus on what they gained from engaging in research	Mirrors the IMRAD structure with methods detailing lab procedures
Design	Mostly written text with a single cartoonish graphic	Balanced between concise writing and visuals, including labeled figures

This chapter will help you understand how you can use the rhetorical concepts you learned in your composition course to decode new writing situations and genres that you'll likely encounter in your upper-level, discipline-specific courses in your major. You might assume that writing is just writing, but Angel's scientific poster shows that is not the case. While you might receive more support in your discipline-specific courses than Prof. Smith provided in the example, you will be expected to be more independent as you develop and revise your writing projects. You also could be expected to learn about disciplinary writing styles and genre conventions by seeking out resources on your own.

Discipline-Specific Courses and Discourse Communities

In Volume 3 of *Writing Spaces*, Dan Melzer helps readers learn about discourse communities, which are named so because they have specific communal expectations related to speaking and writing. Your majors represent discourse communities created by individuals within your discipline and future profession: biologists, nutritionists, professional writers, athletic trainers, hospitality professionals, nurses, and engineers are all different discourse communities.

When you begin taking courses in your major, your professors (who are members of those discourse communities), will develop assignments that help you to practice speaking and writing like members of those discourse communities. To do this, you will need to learn writing styles and genres that are popular in those discourse communities, although this purpose may not be formally explained in class. Professors may not unpack discourse community expectations clearly, or they might expect you to do more independent work learning about writing style and format.

Mary Soliday notes that attempting new genres can be difficult and "disorienting," even for professionals, because you are juggling a lot of newness all at once—"exploring new subject matter, trying on new roles, and meeting unknown audiences" (14). However, you can use the rhetorical concepts you have learned in your composition course to investigate writing in these new situations. And you are more likely to do this successfully when you have opportunity to engage in "bridging practices" to reflect on how your learning in composition can be framed to transfer to a new context (Rounsaville).

Take our issue at hand—the presence of microbiomes in soil. Different discourse communities would approach writing on this topic in different ways, using different formats. A biologist interested in the systematic study of these microbiomes will engage in research projects to collect and analyze soil samples, and share those analytical findings in scientific forms of communication, like a research poster, presentation, or article. A nurse, however, would focus more on educating individuals so that they avoid coming into contact with infection-causing bacteria. Because the nurse has a different purpose and audience, they would produce a genre focused on the general reader, like an informational health pamphlet or newspaper editorial. The writing styles of the biologist and nurse also differ because of their different audiences and purposes, even though they both study within the sciences.

The rest of this chapter will help you develop strategies for using rhetorical concepts (key terms like audience, purpose, rhetoric, genre, and conventions) to decode or investigate discipline-specific writing situations. The section below defines these common rhetorical concepts and explains why these concepts are relevant in your discipline-specific courses. The chapter ends with another scenario: one that shows Angel using the knowledge in the chapter to do better on their poster assignment.

Important Concepts and Definitions

Each rhetorical concept below has a general definition alongside how the concept might be applied in your discipline-specific courses. These terms give us a language to talk about our writing choices and transfer existing writing knowledge to new contexts (Rounsaville 12).

Purpose

Every communicative act has a purpose, or an impact you would like your writing to have on your audience. In Angel's case, their scientific poster was intended to communicate a research experience and its findings to other scientists. Your purpose can be affected by other situational details, like the topic, audience, and genre. Similarly, your purpose can impact your writing style and word choice (i.e., are you writing to inform, persuade, call to action?).

Applying Purpose to New Writing Situations

The purpose of writing in your discipline-specific courses might not always be clear through assignment sheets. For example, scientific posters communicate a research project—its goal, methods, data, key findings, and implications—in a highly visual and easy-to-read fashion. When creating a poster, you need to consider visual design and how your photos, graphs, and tables from the research can support concise writing. Too much writing, and you lose the visual appeal of the scientific poster genre. Too many visuals and the audience does not have enough information to know how to interpret and connect the visual elements.

Consider how Angel and Akeelah each used visuals in their poster examples: Angel included a single, cartoonish visual while Akeelah included several labeled figures from her lab research. It's appropriate for you to ask your professor to explain the single or multiple purposes of an assignment, either during class, in an email, or during office hours. You might say something like, "I know that there should be a specific purpose this writing assignment aims to achieve. Can you help me understand it?"

Audience

The people you are writing to engage, which in turns affects your writing style, format, and choices. When writing for an audience, you will want

to consider their shared experiences and needs and write with those details in mind.

Applying Audience to New Writing Situations

Your audience can vary widely depending on the assignment. A good first question to ask is if your audience will be other experts in your discipline. To revisit our example, scientific posters can differ by their audience. Expert audiences will expect to see methods and terminology that show you are also an expert in their field and that your research project meets rigorous research expectations. If you are writing to other experts in your profession, you can use more technical language and assume a certain level of background knowledge. General audiences care more about the larger implications your research has on the general public, but they may need your help understanding the scientific concepts and terms. If your audience is not in your professional community, you will need to write using language and a style that is approachable to someone who does not have background knowledge in your discipline.

Rhetoric

The words, images, media, sounds, and body language you use to communicate your purpose to your audience. Choose rhetoric that will be effective and meaningful for your audience.

Applying Rhetoric to New Writing Situations

Rhetoric in your disciplinary communities includes more than written words: graphics, figures, and design (e.g., section headings, font size, color choice, layout) also hold value. You'll want to remember this as you are investigating new genres. For example, when viewing a scientific poster, you'll want to pay attention to how visuals like graphics and figures are used to communicate data as well as how design helps make the complex scientific topic being discussed more approachable to the audience. Further, when presenting your poster, your body language and oral delivery can be as influential as your word choice and poster design in helping your audience understand your research.

Genre

Most people think about genres that appear on their Netflix account: action, drama, documentary. But in writing, genres are different forms of writing. These formats have come to exist over time as individuals responded to the same rhetorical situation and needed to solve recurring communication problems. For instance, a resume is a particular genre that quickly tells an employer about your qualifications and background before the interview stage of hiring. You write a resume for a specific audience to achieve a particular purpose, persuading them to offer you an interview or job. Resumes help employers solve a problem: how can they review every applicant without expending too much time or labor?

While genres do not have concrete rules, they do contain conventions related to their structure, organization, language, and style (Miller 163). My use of in-text citations throughout this chapter is a genre convention that has come to be associated with forms of academic writing: I am expected to link my thought and ideas to existing scholars on a topic. So, as I discuss genre, I cite Carolyn Miller's foundational text on how genres perform social actions, but I paraphrase Miller's point so that her ideas are more accessible to my chapter's audience.

Applying Genre to New Writing Situations

Inevitably, you will encounter new genres in your discipline-specific courses: lab reports, presentations, memos, posters, case studies. It is important to ask questions and learn about new genres as they represent ways that professionals in your discourse community communicate with one another. The first time you complete a writing assignment in a new genre, it is common to struggle and want additional support. As you develop drafts of these assignments, seek out models of successful examples, feedback from peers and experts in your discipline (like your professor), and writing about the genre, which may exist within your professional community (for an example, see Andrea Gilpin and Patricia Patchet-Golubev's *A Guide to Writing in the Sciences* or Suzan Last's *Technical Writing Essentials: Introduction to Professional Communications in the Technical Fields*). Prof. Smith included some of these resources in her syllabus, but Angel had forgotten about them. You may want to refer to course documents, like the syllabus, or other institutional resources, like subject-librarians.

Conventions

The characteristics that an audience associates with a particular genre and thus expects to see. These conventions can relate to the writing's purpose, content, structure, organization, style, tone, language, and formatting.

Applying Conventions to New Writing Situations

As you encounter new genres, you should ask what conventions are associated with each genre. When attempting to write in a new genre, you want to be aware of conventions because your audience will expect to see them. These might be (but are not always) described in the assignment sheet. They should be observable in successful examples of the genre, so look for models of the genre in which you are writing. Ask questions about what writing in these genres typically looks like and does and seek out examples when you can.

Conventions can vary because of your audience, discipline, or culture. For instance, the conventions associated with a research poster can vary across disciplines: a research poster you create in a biology course may have different conventions than a research poster you create in a history course. While both will still purposefully communicate research, biologists expect concise informative writing, a straightforward design, and want to see scientific methods, while historians allow for more creative design with persuasive moments in writing and research methods drawn from the humanities. Conventions can vary across cultures and national contexts, too. Poster conventions that are typical for American professionals might differ from posters that those in the same profession in Japan or Ghana create because different cultures appreciate different aesthetic designs and have different ways to logically make meaning.

Writers do sometimes purposefully reject conventions because they want to challenge the expected to impact the audience. You should always deviate from conventions intentionally. Because conventions come to be expected by your audience, deviating from them might leave your audience confused or questioning your expertise. For instance, a biologist presenting their scientific poster to an audience of high schoolers might reduce their technical terms and play with a more colorful, creative design. Departing from conventions in this case makes the information more accessible and appealing to the biologist's audience and helps the biologist achieve their purpose: to engage high schoolers in learning about biology research.

Table 1

This table briefly summarizes these rhetorical concepts and offers some guiding questions to get you thinking about these concepts in your writing.

RHETORICAL CONCEPT	DEFINITION	GUIDING QUESTIONS
Purpose	An impact you would like your writing to have on your audience (e.g., inform, persuade, call to act)	• What do I want readers to do while and after engaging with this writing? • Where do professionals use this type of writing in the real world? • When will I use this type of writing after graduation? • How do my choices in writing style and design align with this writing's purpose?
Audience	The people you are writing to engage, which in turns affects your writing style, format, and choices. When writing for an audience, you will want to consider their shared experiences and needs.	• What does my audience know about my topic? What background information should I assume they already know, and what information will need to be introduced or explained to them? • What does my audience expect to see because of the genre I'm writing in? How can I meet those expectations or intentionally stray from them to achieve a greater rhetorical impact? • What specific needs, interests, and goals do members of my audience share?
Rhetoric	The words, images, media, sounds, and body language you use to communicate your purpose to your audience	• How can my writing be designed to achieve a visual impact? Can I **bold**, *italicize,* or otherwise format my words for rhetorical effect? Can I break my ideas down into sections, subsections, and lists for brevity? • What visual elements, like figures and graphs, can I include to support my audience's understanding? • What visual genres might be most appealing to my audience? Would they be more likely to engage with infographics, short videos, or one-page overviews rather than the traditional essay?
Genre	Different forms of writing that have come to exist because they solve communication problems. Because genres recur, audiences come to expect to see certain genre conventions.	• What problem does this genre solve? What is its purpose? • What similarities are shared by successful examples of this genre? • What writing resources exist that discuss how one can approach writing in this genre? • What does my audience expect to see because of the genre I'm writing in? How can I meet those expectations or intentionally stray from them to achieve a greater rhetorical impact?
Genre Conventions	The characteristics that an audience associates with a particular genre and thus expects to see. These conventions can relate to the writing's purpose, content, structure, organization, style, tone, language, and formatting.	• What expectations are identified in the assignment sheet and rubric? • What conventions can I observe by looking at successful examples of this genre in my discipline? • What does my audience expect to see because of the genre I'm writing in? How can I meet those expectations or intentionally stray from them to achieve a greater rhetorical impact? • Do I want to follow the genre conventions, or should I intentionally subvert or deviate from them to impact my audience in a particular way?

Strategies for Approaching New Writing Situations in Your Discipline

This section will lead you through strategies that can help you intentionally apply these rhetorical concepts in new writing situations. Before you begin writing,

- Carefully examine materials, like assignment sheets and rubrics. Pay attention to the purpose in the prompt (it can usually be identified through the verbs that are used, like "justify," "reflect," "analyze," "research"). Nelms and Dively remind us that these verbs can take on different meanings across the disciplines: "research" might imply reviewing library sources in a writing course but might refer to data collected in a lab setting in science courses (227). When unclear, you should ask professors for examples and further explanation.
- Identify each rhetorical concept for the assignment and check that what you've identified matches what the professor is requiring.
- Genre matters! Ask experts to talk to you about genre conventions. If possible, locate examples of this genre from within your discipline and analyze the rhetorical moves that the writer is making. Then, reflect on the rhetorical choices you made in your draft and why you made them. Consider how you would justify *why* you wrote the project in this way if asked.
- Locate resources related to writing in your discipline, like examples and guidebooks. Seek out feedback from your peers in the course, professor, subject-librarians, TAs, writing center tutors, among others.
- Make a plan: when will you begin the project, how will you get feedback, and what resources will you draw from when you have questions? Give yourself time to engage in a writing process. This means you'll need to start a project when it's introduced to have ample time to revise higher-order elements like organization and structure as well as lower-order elements like sentence-level clarity, consistency in language, and proofreading.

After doing this work, I would still recommend visiting your professor during office hours to confirm that what you've found aligns with their expectations for the assignment. Coming to office hours with questions that have emerged from this investigatory process will show your initiative as a student while also ensuring you meet expectations. Remember, joining a

discipline takes time. Don't be discouraged if you struggle at first. Being able to use feedback to grow and learn will help you gain the disciplinary expertise that you need to feel more confident as a writer in this new space.

Applying These Strategies to a Scenario

Let's revisit Angel's story again. This time, consider what you would do if you were in their position:

In BIO 2030, Prof. Smith, introduced a new assignment, a scientific poster. The assignment prompt asks students to communicate the research they've been doing in their labs to a scientific audience. The assignment will be due in one month but will not be worked on during the class although some of the readings and lectures might be relevant to the assignment. What should Angel do next? Help them consider the important questions they should ask as well as what resources they can locate to help them begin their project.

What Might Angel Do Next?

I hope you had some sensible advice for Angel this time around. For one, they should begin by seeing if there is an extended assignment sheet or rubric that they can reference to get more information on the purpose, audience, genre, and conventions. They should also look back to the course syllabus to see if additional writing resources are listed there.

Next, they can locate resources and examples on scientific posters in biology. Once they feel they have a sense of what Prof. Smith might be expecting in this assignment, Angel could email her or visit office hours to make sure they are meeting her expectations. In this meeting, they should bring their resources and talk through them, showing Prof. Smith that they have done some initial research and found good examples to build from. This is a good point in the process for Prof. Smith to let Angel know if they are missing key assignment expectations.

After Angel is confident, they can create a first draft and get feedback. Ideally, they should find someone familiar with scientific writing, like a peer in Biology or a writing center consultant with a background in STEM writing. Angel shouldn't rely on friends without experience with scientific writing as their English major friend will likely be using different writing conventions than their professor expects. This feedback will help Angel know if what they are intending to communicate is coming across clearly to a real reader. As they revise, Angel could continue to use the resourc-

es they found, the assignment materials, and additional opportunities for feedback.

Aside from potentially doing better on the assignment, Angel will feel more confident as a writer in biology. Also, Angel will engage in important strategies that are necessary to developing writing: considering genre and context, embracing the writing process, and integrating feedback. These steps are taken by all writers—even writers who are experienced with their professional community and its expectations.

Conclusion

While you have established a solid foundation through your composition course, all students, new professionals, even experts continue to learn about writing well beyond composition. I hold multiple graduate degrees in English and participate in a discipline with others who study and teach writing. Despite our expertise in writing studies, *even we frequently commiserate that writing is a taxing and troublesome act.*

When you are adapting to discipline-specific writing, those challenges are heightened, and sometimes you might even experience failure in your initial attempts to write something new. Those feelings of confusion that might be overwhelming at first are very normal experiences! If you take the time to evaluate each new writing situation and apply the rhetorical concepts you have learned, you can transfer your writing habits and take advantage of available resources. I hope these tips prepare you to anticipate new writing challenges and give you some strategies for tackling them.

Note

Thank you to Noah Flood, a talented peer consultant in Auburn University's Miller Writing Center, for his feedback on this chapter.

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Teacher Resources for "'I Passed First-Year Writing—What Now?' Adapting Strategies from First-Year Writing in the Disciplines

Overview and Teaching Strategies

Thank you for reading—and potentially teaching—this chapter! This chapter is meant to help students consider how they will adapt the strategies that they learned in composition when they enter discipline-specific courses in their major. As an administrator in a WAC program, I really hope that students are asked to write in meaningful ways beyond their general education writing courses. Research in writing across the curriculum, writing in the disciplines, and career success identify the ability to communicate effectively as integral for professional preparation. This chapter is meant to resist the assumption that the completion of their general education writing courses means students are done learning about writing. Moreover, it encourages students to critically think about how they can take more agency in writing transfer and anticipate that writing in their disciplinary courses will likely have less scaffolding and support than they experienced in composition courses.

This chapter opens with a scenario describing a student who experienced success in composition but could not transfer the skills they learned to a biology scientific poster assignment. Then, it explains how key rhetorical concepts can be applied in a writing in the disciplines setting. After, it gives students some tips they can use to guide their writing in these new contexts. It ends by revisiting the scenario and asking students how they might advise the student featured in this story. The conclusion reminds readers the work of learning writing never ends.

I encourage you to use this chapter alongside other WAC/WID activities, such as researching genres and writing situations common to students' professional and disciplinary communities or speaking with experts in their future fields about writing. In my own composition course, I ask students to complete a genre analysis of a genre that is used often within their future professions. Then, after analyzing the genre and researching a topic relevant to professional conversations in their discipline, they compose the genre for the first time. I would ask students to read this chapter after that final project alongside a reflective activity that asks them to imagine their future writing tasks and articulate how their writing strategies can help

them complete these tasks. The discussion questions below can facilitate this reflective process.

Discussion Questions

Please use these discussion questions to guide synchronous or asynchronous discussion. They are broken into two sections: one that asks about the chapter's content and another that asks students to begin reflecting on their future disciplinary writing.

Reviewing the Chapter's Content

1. Review the key rhetorical concepts that the author uses in this chapter. Which concepts are familiar to you and which are new? How do you see these concepts at work in the writing you've done for this course?

2. In your opinion, is the scenario that opens and closes this chapter realistic to writing assignments in other courses? What challenges related to how you understand writing in your discipline are understated or missing? What do you wish the author had considered or added when creating the opening scenario?

3. The author has a list of writing strategies that she encourages you to consider. In looking over this list, which strategies complement your writing process? Which strategies do you think would be more difficult to integrate into your writing habits?

Reflecting as a Writer

1. The author mentions the role that failure and frustration plays in adapting to new writing situations. Think about a particular time you felt frustrated by a writing situation: what did you do? How did you overcome the challenges? What would you have done differently? How did this past challenge prepare you to better respond to future writing-related challenges?

2. In reflecting on your future professional community, identify some writing situations (purposes, audiences, genres, and forms of rhetoric) that are commonly used in that community. What do you know about these writing situations? If you were to engage in these

situations as a writer, what questions would you need answered to be successful?

3. Open an internet search and type in "Writing in…" completing the phrase with your future professional or disciplinary community. Take 10–15 minutes to review some resources that come up. Then, do some freewriting about what you found: what resources did you find, and do you believe they reliably represent writing in your future profession? What organization or individual created these resources, and are they good authorities of writing in your discipline? What did you learn about writing in this professional community? How is this approach to writing different than writing you have done? What excites you about writing in these new ways? What do you want the writing you do in your profession to accomplish?

Optional Activities: Read-Like-a-Writer

This activity has been developed from Mike Bunn's chapter "How to Read Like a Writer" chapter in Writing Spaces, *vol. 2.*

For Teachers

I use this brainstorming activity to open a genre analysis assignment. I model with students how to engage in answering these questions. If it's early in the semester, I model using the syllabus (which can actually be helpful in teaching students how to read syllabi), but if that is not a timely suggestion, you can use pop culture genres (like Instagram posts, memes, blogs) or other familiar genres. When I'm teaching online, this is a shared discussion board, Google doc, or Padlet thread that everyone contributes to. When I'm teaching face-to-face, we orally discuss the example while I take notes on a shared doc or visible whiteboard. After we discuss a shared example, I ask students to complete the read-like-a-writer questions for the genre they would like to focus on the for the genre analysis. Students will then build on their answers to these questions to create a first draft of their genre analysis assignment.

Disciplinary instructors could use this activity to introduce a genre that students will be creating—like a scientific poster. This will help students learn about the new genre and create a conversational space where the instructor can emphasize assignment expectations.

For Students

Find 1–3 examples of a genre used by your professional community. If you are working with a longer genre, just read one part across all examples (e.g., if you are reading academic journal articles in your future discipline, maybe just look at a single section of each article).

Take time to read through each example. Instead of worrying about the content, read these examples with the goal of learning how the writer put them together: the choices they made and the writing strategies they used. The questions below will help you by leading you to look at specific features within the text(s). By reflecting on how the writing is designed to achieve its rhetorical goals, we can learn about writing in our professional disciplinary communities and begin to consider which strategies we would like to bring into our own writing.

Rhetorical Considerations

1. What is the purpose of this writing? To answer this question, look for clues in the text, but also consider where is has been published or shared.

2. Who is the audience? The answer is not everyone. Who would be interested in reading this text and who is it meant to reach given its purpose?

3. What forms of rhetoric are used throughout this text? Is the purpose achieved through alphabetic writing, visual rhetoric, embodied rhetoric, oral rhetorical cues, etc. Where are key moments in this text where you think the rhetoric is particularly strong in achieving its purpose?

4. What is the genre of this text? How does this genre relate to the text's audience and purpose?

5. What are the conventions of this genre? Put differently, what would someone expect to see because you are writing in this genre? Where do you see the writer pushing against the conventions and where do you see them following those conventions?

Text Design

1. How is the example organized? What logic guides how the text is put together?
2. How long is the text overall? Does that overall length get evenly distributed across all sections of the text or are certain sections longer than others?
3. What are the text's main parts or components?
4. How does the writer introduce or open the text? How long is the introduction? What rhetorical moves are made to bring the audience into the text and inform them of its purpose?
5. How long are paragraphs within the text? If the text doesn't have paragraphs, how long are sentences?
6. How does the writer close or conclude the text? How long is the conclusion? What rhetorical moves are made to wrap up the text and reinforce the text's purpose?
7. Does the writer attribute or cite ideas and sources? If so, what does that referencing process look like: are there in-text citations, footnotes, end notes, hyperlinks, tags?
8. What do you notice about the writer's language and style of writing? Is it formal or informal? Does it use technical or generalized language? How does it fit the audience and purpose of the text?

Process of Creation

1. What do you think was the writer's process for creating this text? Where might they have gotten feedback? What did the revision process perhaps take into account? How might they have known when the text was "done" or done enough to publish?
2. What steps did the writer take to make this text accessible? Accessibility includes steps taken in the design process to make it readable for those using assistive technologies, like screen readers, but it can also include language and design considerations that make the text

more approachable to readers with different disciplinary, professional, educational, and cultural backgrounds.

Adding to Your Writing Toolkit

1. What about this text complements how you write? These can be rhetorical strategies or design characteristics that appeal to you, or aspects of the process that fit your own process for writing.
2. What about this text is new or different from your writing? Do you have any interest adopting any of these strategies?
3. What challenges might you experience trying to write in this genre for the first time?
4. What resources or support could help you write in this genre for this audience and purpose?