

Seven Compelling Reasons for Using Writing in Your Courses

1. Writing is a "way of learning." Writing entails high-order, domain-spanning thinking processes that are integral to learning.

2. Writing encourages "active learning." From brainstorming to e-mail to formal papers and essay exams, writing provides a way for students to "see what they think" and to elaborate on it. Writing not only reinforces but also permits learning.

3. Some kinds of thought, especially the kinds we hope teaching moments inspire, emerge only when we try to communicate them to ourselves and others. Writing fosters the ability to explore and articulate relationships, to wrestle with "why" and "how," to learn what counts as support in a discipline, and to refine thinking.

4. Many disciplines evaluate student performance in terms of writing ability. By incorporating writing activities into your courses and making effective writing important, you give students vital practice in the skills on which their performances in many academic fields will be assessed.

5. Giving students more opportunities to write and more responses to their work makes improved writing quality more likely. Writing is learnable. Providing students with help with the processes of writing and with opportunities to write will improve idea fluency and flexibility, develop meta-cognitive abilities required to engage in complex decision-making tasks, and introduce students to the ways of communicating ideas that are specific to your discipline. What it means to think like a scientist is inextricably linked to what it means to write like a scientist.

6. Writing is important to achievement not only in academic disciplines but also in other workplace settings.

7. Emphasizing the uses and benefits of writing in your courses helps improve students' attitudes toward their own abilities and invites them to use writing in new ways. Moreover, using writing to enhance learning makes you more aware of what constitutes writing effectiveness and stands to improve the quality of your own work.