

Tips for Writing Good Session Notes

- Keep in mind that there are various audiences and purposes for these notes: writers use them to remember the revision plans generated in sessions; faculty use them to follow up on students' writing; the writing center uses them for assessment/research purposes.
- Given these audiences & purposes, you should ensure your session notes are specific and detailed.
- Be sure to proofread!
- You should type the note, with input from the writer (of course). This will ensure a level of detail and correctness that will be most useful to all audiences—and give a good impression of the writing center!

Example Notes

EXCELLENT

The student plans to re-read her article so that she has a better understanding of the main concepts. She's then going to make an outline using the rough outline we worked on in the Writing Center to get a first draft started. The student is going to try to come back to the WC before she turns in her paper.

- Very specific about the writer's revision plans.
 - For these notes to be useful to faculty, details are necessary so they know how to intervene in the writer's process upon reading the next draft.
 - For these notes to be useful to students, details are necessary so that they can remember the revision plans you devised during the session.
 - For these notes to be useful to the writing center, we need to know what kinds of things you worked on—just in case the writer or professor follow up with Patrick, Lisa, or Melanie, and also because we read groups of these notes to get a sense of how we help writers in the center.
- “Make an outline using the rough outline we worked on in the Writing Center”—demonstrates exactly how the student is going to get going on a revision.
- It's well-written, clear, and doesn't include grammar errors.
- Would be helpful to mention the assignment—just in case the professor has assigned several and will wonder to which paper this pertains.

GOOD

The student came in with concerns that her persuasive essay topic would not be suitable for such a paper. We brainstormed ways that the student could generate more supporting evidence for the paper and turn it into an interesting and informative piece.

- Well-written, overall.
- Could be a touch more specific: what was this problematic persuasive essay topic?

- Overall, this note will be useful to writer, professor, and writing center. However, the professor may wonder what topic the writer was worried about. It could be useful for the professor to have that info so he/she could follow up with the writer.

AN OK EFFORT, BUT NOT ACCEPTABLE:

At this point, number one revision plan is to expand on the ideas. Several specific places throughout the piece could use more details, etc. A few places where writer could eliminate less important details in order to develop the focus of the paper.

- Pretty detailed—gives the professor a good sense of what the writer worked on, and serves the writer, too, as a good reminder of the session. In other words, the content is fine.
- The sentence fragments make this harder to read and don't give off a good impression of the writing center. Remember: a primary audience for these session reports is faculty—we want to impress them with our writing abilities!
- Because this has some stylistic problems, Patrick would end up rewriting the note a bit—and he doesn't really have time to do that.

UNACCEPTABLE

The student and I worked on the organization of content.

- For what essay/assignment? Sometimes, professors have assigned multiple projects at once.
- What did you do in the session to work on organizing content? What sort of organizational pattern (or strategy) did the writer settle on? (Letting professors know this is actually great PR for the writing center—you all have good consulting skills; might as well show them off a bit!)
- How will the student reorganize the content? That is, what's the specific plan for revision?

UNACCEPTABLE

Discused arguemennt essay. Student will mk changes.

- What did you discuss, exactly?
- What are these mysterious changes that will be made?
- Please be sure to spell correctly. J We know you can be busy and feel pressured to get to the next student in line—and we don't mind cleaning up mistakes in session notes here & there. But do make an effort to be careful, and make use of the spellchecker built into ScheduleIT.
- Please avoid text-speak.