

FYW Guidebook

First-Year Writing Program | University of Georgia

2026-2027

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Introduction to First-Year Writing.....	3
Administration:	3
Why Write? FYW and Academic Discourse.....	3
CHAPTER 2: Description of First-Year Writing Courses	5
English 1101: First-year Composition I.....	5
English 1102: First-year Composition II.....	6
Alternative Approaches to First-Year Writing	7
CHAPTER 3: Policies and Procedures	9
Placement	9
Absences.....	9
Grade Appeals	10
Incompletes.....	10
Plus/Minus Grading	10
CHAPTER 4: Using eLW in the First-Year Writing Program.....	12
What is eLW?	12
Accessing eLW.....	12
Projects	12
Creating a Document.....	12
Reviews	14
Markup	15
Compare Documents	17
Journal.....	17
Technical Information.....	18
FYW Digital Learning Labs.....	18
CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION OF ESSAYS	19
Introduction to the Flexible Block Rubric.....	19
Rubric Blocks and Programmatic Definitions	21
CHAPTER 6: ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIOS.....	24
First-Year Writing Electronic Portfolio Instructions	24
Elements of the Portfolio	24
Other Guidelines:	25

Portfolio Evaluation	26
CHAPTER 7: ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM	29
UGA Academic Honesty Policy	29
Plagiarism	29
Generative AI and First-Year Writing	29
CHAPTER 8: RESOURCES	31
Tutoring and Help with Writing	31
The UGA Libraries	32
University Health Center	32
Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)	33
Accessibility and Testing	33
Student Care & Outreach	33
CHAPTER 9: WHAT COMES NEXT?	35
Writing Certificate Program	35
Writing Intensive Program (WIP)	35
The Major and Minor in English	35
Advanced Courses in Writing	36

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO FIRST-YEAR WRITING

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WHY WRITE? FYW AND ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Writing does more than convey information; working through the writing process can help us figure out what we think and feel about a subject. The world would be simpler if writing was a simple process of transcribing and transmitting our thoughts! But how many times have you sat down to write, thinking you knew what you wanted to express, only to find that your thoughts were jumbled or half-formed? Or you may have begun a writing assignment feeling like you had nothing to say, but discovered, as you wrote, that you had a surprising perspective or argument about your subject. In both cases, you discovered what you actually knew or thought only in the act of writing.

Scholars and researchers have long known that writing is itself “a way of knowing.” The act of writing improves comprehension of academic material and fixes that material in our memories. Even more important, writing can play a crucial role in the process of learning itself. Writing helps us to make connections among different pieces of information and between information and ideas; it also provides us with a visible record of those connections and (for instance, in the case of multiple drafts) shows us how our ideas change over time. In other words, writing allows us to produce not just information, but knowledge.

The kind of writing focused on in First-Year Writing (FYW) is called academic discourse. At the University of Georgia, you will be asked to do many different kinds of writing for your classes. As you move into your academic major toward graduation, you will become increasingly involved in writing tasks that draw on specific genres and conventions for your academic field. Psychologists, for instance, engage in different kinds of research and writing than do literary critics. First-Year Writing cannot prepare you directly for all these advanced experiences in writing; what we do instead is to give you a grounding in academic discourse, which lays a foundation for later thinking and writing experiences by practicing kinds of writing that seek to inform and persuade a range of audiences. In FYW courses, you will do research on various topics and, together with your teacher and fellow students, work through writing and discussion to use that information to produce knowledge. You will also test the persuasiveness of your knowledge for a variety of audiences, including your teacher, peers, and others.

Two other important goals of FYW are the arts of revision and collaborative critique. For each writing assignment, FYW classes engage in drafting and revision, and for each they engage as well in peer review. You get the opportunity to demonstrate your proficiency in these two crucial areas in the Composing/Revision and Peer Review exhibits in the Electronic Portfolio that you submit as your final requirement in the course. (The Electronic Portfolio is discussed in detail later in this book.) Your skill in these areas will stand you in good stead as you leave your current teacher and classmates, moving through the core curriculum and your chosen major at the University of Georgia. Finally, our program emphasizes writing in electronic environments that are important not only to academics and the world of

business, but also to individuals in their private lives. You will experience a variety of technologies in FYW, including the program's own electronic writing environment, eLW, which we use both for work during the semester and for constructing final FYW Electronic Portfolios.

The Instructors and Administration of UGA's First-Year Writing Program sincerely hope that you enjoy your experiences with writing this year and that you leave our program with the skills and work habits necessary to succeed in writing tasks throughout the curriculum and in the world of work. More broadly, we hope that you leave us feeling confident of your critical thinking, your composing and revision skills, and your ability to comment intelligently on your own and others' writing. Finally, we hope that you will continue to enjoy and practice writing during your years at the University of Georgia. For that reason, we will give you information later about further opportunities for reading and writing at UGA.