

Writing Workshops in First-Year Composition

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What are the Purposes of the Workshop?



- To give writers attentive readings of their completed drafts.
- To understand how effectively you have achieved your purposes in a first draft.
- To understand the social context of writing in order to strengthen revision.

Workshop Roles

- Draft Coordinator:** Serves as a liaison between group members about the receipt of drafts. Communicates any issues with group members and instructor, if necessary.
- Facilitator:** Starts the workshop and keeps the group focused on productive reader response and constructive criticism.
- Time Keeper:** Helps keep the team on task within time limits, making sure that each writer has equal time.
- Group Processing Coordinator:** Helps the group reflect on and improve their work together, using the prompts for reflection.

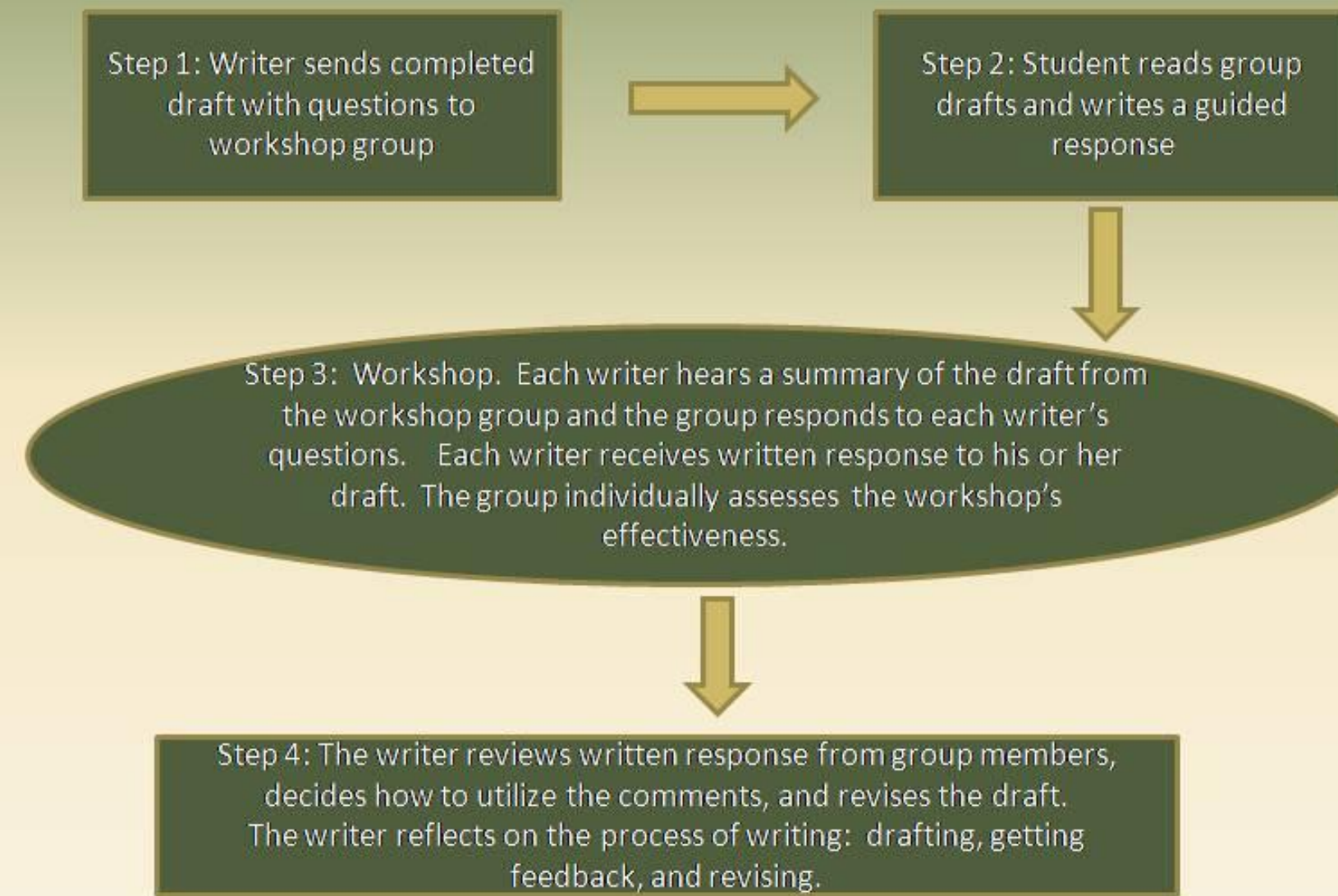
Assessment

Step 3: The Workshop

- Participate actively, as a reader and a writer.
- The *facilitator* begins by reviewing the purpose of the workshop.
- The *draft coordinator* reviews the sending of drafts and the *time keeper* leads a strategy for coverage of all drafts.
- Focus on one writer at a time.
- Give a verbal summary of the essay, focusing on your reading of it.
- Begin with what works well in the draft.
- Respond to the writer's questions, pointing to specifics in the draft.
- The group processing coordinator leads the group in reflection:
 - What worked well about the workshop?
 - What aspects of the workshop can we improve individually and as a group?
- The group concludes by completing the checklist.

Assessment: 10 points for active participation, based on checklist.

The Format of the Workshop



Assessment

Step 1: Draft

Send a completed draft with three questions.

Rather than a broad and generic question such as, "Is my essay well-organized?" ask a more specific question such as, "I started out by reflecting on our culture's approach to death before analyzing the argument in Mitford's essay. I want to give readers something to think about before dissecting the argument, but I'm afraid readers may get lost. Is this approach effective?"

Assessment: 20 points for sending the draft on time, with questions.

Assessment

Step 4: Reflection



- How did you utilize the workshop to effectively revise your draft? Be specific.
- What will you apply from this workshop to the drafting of the next essay?

Assessment: 10 points, assessed for depth of reflection and clarity of communication.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Apply strategies for close reading to a variety of texts, including personal essays and argument essays
- Apply critical thinking—especially analysis and inquiry—to readings and issues
- Respond effectively to their own drafts and the drafts of others
- Revise writing to effectively achieve the intended purposes.

Assessment

Step 2: Written Response

I. Respond to the writer's questions about his /her draft, giving specific examples from the paper or about the issue as you respond.

II. Give an overall response to the essay draft. Address the following aspects of writing:

Does the writer respond to the assignment?

What is the essay's main point? Use your own words to rephrase the thesis.

What are the supporting arguments and how effectively are they substantiated?

Reflect on the essay's organization: can you move easily from point to point? Is the order logical?

Reflect on the introduction and conclusion: do they achieve their purpose?

III. What insights, thoughts or further questions do you have about the subject of the essay?

For each area of written communication, give specific examples from the draft to explain and support your comments.

Assessment: 30 points for written preparation, assessed for response to prompts, attentiveness to draft, understanding of rhetorical contexts, and detailed support.

Student Comments

- I found the workshops to be helpful in having a better idea about what to work on in my revision.
- My group members gave me valuable feedback that helped me revise my essay.
- I am now able to write papers that go beyond the point of initial thought.
- Numerous additions and revisions are required to help make my papers better.
- The workshops were extremely helpful. My writing, as well as my ideas and thinking improved.

