

The Importance of Good Writing Skills

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Writing skills can be the ticket to better college grades and greater academic achievement. This article introduces a few techniques for applying writing skills to college success. But this good advice will be lost on you if you don't believe writing skills are important and can help you achieve academic mastery. Our job is to convince you. To begin with, the overwhelming majority of instructors we surveyed said that writing skills are critical to academic success.

And if you see yourself as one of those college students who will say "Phew" when the syllabus reveals only exams and no papers, what happens when those exams turn out to be essay tests? This article suggests a few ways to raise your grade on those exams simply by employing the principles of good writing—even if you study no harder and know the material no better than you do now.

Perhaps you've heard that no one cares about your grades once you leave the halls of academia. While that notion holds some truth, it is equally true that most potential employers do care about writing skills. They care so much that they bemoan the poor preparation of the entry-level pool of grads. In a labor force full of mediocre writers, someone who writes well is bound to stand out and succeed.

Academicians and business people view writing skills as crucial, yet increasing numbers of these professionals note a steady erosion in the writing abilities of graduates. The summary of a study published in *Personnel Updates* states: "Writing skills... of executives are shockingly low, indicating that schools and colleges dismally fail with at least two-thirds of the people who pass through the education pipeline coming out unable to write a simple letter."

In 1988, Lin Gensing reported that 79 percent of surveyed executives cited writing as one of the most neglected skills in the business world, yet one of the most important to productivity. A 1992 survey of 402 companies reported by the *Associated Press* noted that executives identified writing as the most valued skill but said 80 percent of their employees at all levels need to improve. The number of workers needing improvement was up 20 percent from results of the same survey in 1991. Results of a 1993 study by *Olsten Corp.*, a placement agency, were almost identical: 80 percent of 443 employers surveyed said their workers needed training in writing skills.

The need for workers with writing skills will only increase. A 1991 report by the U.S. Labor Department noted that most future jobs will require writing skills.