

Alright, so welcome you guys. I'm glad to see you here. I think I have more people in this workshop than I have in my class. So this is, this is nice to have this many faces. I am Corcketa Allen. I am an instructor in the school of communication. I have had, I think at least two of you in this workshop. So I'm glad to see you here. One, Eriel is a current student, so I guess it doesn't hurt to get a little bit more outside of class, then you're getting in class, so glad to see you here. So today I do want to just kinda talk about some things that I think we'll help you to become better writers. I know that you're all good writers, but it does not hurt to be a better writer. And so I'm just going to kind of give you what I believe just some, some common sense things that'll help you. So there are five simple things that I think that you can do to be a better writer. The first thing, of course, is to read, yes, read those assignments that your instructors give you that hold on. My bad. We those and read those assignments that your instructors give you that you know, you, you don't want to do, but you know that you probably should do them, because it's gonna have some benefit in the long run. So definitely read those assignments. I'll talk a little bit more about that in a second. Ask for help. I think that is the probably the biggest mistake that students make. Thinking that you're bothering us by asking for help or thinking that you're going to come across as not being very bright. You know, it's better to get help than not. Okay, and I'll talk more about that in a second. It's a common mistake. I think a lot of instructors have told me that they see. Learn to generate ideas that helps to be a better writer, whatever method that you can do it, be it freewriting, brainstorming, just kinda listing ideas, do on some creative prompts. Anything just to kind of help you to generate ideas, write and rewrite. You can't just do it one time and think that one product is going to be perfect. Practice, practice, practice, okay? And then finally, write every day. Don't just write because you have to, right? Because you want to maybe keep a journal, write some song lyrics, anything just to kind of get in the practice, more than just a text message here and there. But just kind of get in the habit of writing just a little bit every day. Okay, so the first thing I said, of course, is to read. Good writers read words are the lifeblood of great writing. There's no way to get, to, to get good without lots of valuable input. Ok, so good input produces even better output. What kind of things do y'all like to read? Fiction, non-fiction. Anybody a reader on here? I like war literature. Really? Okay. slaughterhouse five, Kurt Vonnegut. Okay, so okay, alright, mysteries. Anybody like to read a good documentary by a biography, anything like that? Yeah, I read a Michael Jordan one. Yeah. So the more you read, I believe that it does help you to become a better writer. So why do you read? Of course, it's how we get information. I mean, anytime we have to do research, we gotta read the source that we're gonna use, so we're trying to get information. It's always good preparation for your lectures and discussions. There are some instructors, they strictly lecture, but there are some a us that also like to have discussions about the reading. And it is no fun for me when I know what the the, the source is about and I'm the only one this read it. And I can't really have a discussion because my students haven't read it. So be its preparation so that you can contribute to the discussions. And I will tell you that many of us remember those students who speak up in class because they're demonstrating that they have read it. Okay? It also helps you to prepare for exams, papers, and assignments. Reading in the same genre can also help you to write better, okay, the same genre that you're actually going to be writing in. So how to read is also important. So you want to look for answers to your questions. A lot of the time when I give assignments, I also give discussion questions just so my students can demonstrate to me that they have read, write in the margins. I think it's, it's always better to write notes from your reading than it is to highlight. Not to say that highlighting underlining is important because it can be helpful. But I find that when I use a highlighter with my reading, sometimes before I know what I have highlighted a whole paragraph or a whole page and I have no idea why all of that information is important. So you definitely want to be

more aware of that and maybe think about just writing in the margins, okay. Also breaking your writing up, I'm sorry, breaking your reading up into chunks. You know, many of you probably have three or four chapters you have to read for a class. I would not recommend sitting there reading those three chapters because you're probably not going to retain anything. So build yourself a schedule. Wait a little bit, take some notes, come back, read second chapter and so on. Okay, and then of course, take breaks when you need it because, you know too much is gonna, is gonna overwhelm you. Okay. I like this little meme that I've seen so many times. And every time I see it, I think about what my students possibly look like when they're doing a paper that's gonna be due by midnight. They look like this Kermit trying to get their work done. So the, a good writer is done to make sure to, to, to recognize when they need help. And they're going to plan ahead. Take advantage of your instructor's office hours. Also, those optional days I do days where, you know, well now it's different since we have to social distance, but I'll just have a zoom class and I'll say jump on if you have questions. Take advantage of those because, you know, we're just sitting here and if you have a question, it's just really like be in face-to-face. So take advantage of office hours, take advantage of those Zoom meetings that you know, where there will not be class so that you can get help. Visit the Center for Writing and communication. I do know that they are still doing face to face tutoring. Of course, they have the plexi board or whatever. So they, they are socially distancing there as well. And then they do zoom conferences as well as email. You can communicate with them via email. Okay. And then of course, you know, form your own study or writing group for help as well. Okay. Don't be afraid to ask for help. And as soon as you get an assignment, that's when you want to, to make sure you understand it. Don't wait a week. And then say, I really don't know what I'm doing. Because chances are you didn't know you didn't understand the assignment when it was first discussed. So you don't wait until, you know, it's close to getting a draft turned in before you decide that you need help, okay, budget your time. Break the assignment up into manageable parts and do some part of it regularly. I typically give my students about two weeks before the first draft is due. So they have to build in time to do their research and then produce a draft. Take advantage of that time. Don't wait until the night before something's due because chances are it's not going to be a good piece of work. So budget, the time you have if you know something that's going to be due three weeks from the time it its assigned, you know, do a little bit at a time so you don't feel so overwhelmed. Also create a schedule. So this is just kind of a mock-up. It looks really weird here on the screen, but it's about a four week calendar pretty much. And so, you know, you can kind of decide how you want to manage your time. So once the paper is assigned, maybe take a little time to kind of think about it. Begin to work on an intro. If there is no research that you have to do. Start your draft, maybe set up an appointment in the Writing Center, have your own goal of a due date before the paper is actually due so. This is just kind of a, a student mock-up, but you do what works best for you. Do any of you keep a calendar. I know that's kind of old school people don't really key calendars anymore. Yeah. Okay. That's good. So I posted here the hours and I believe that these are accurate as of this semester. And I don't know if they're doing Sunday hours though. I should've check. But you can always go to their website to get some information and call them as well to find out the hours or CWC. Okay. So the next Idea I talked about is generating ideas. You know, you could do some brainstorming, just kinda writing down anything that comes to mind about your subject, which will lead to a topic. Just kinda doing some free writing that always works best for me. Just kind of getting down as many ideas as I possibly can think about journaling. That's something that can also be helpful to do some creative writing challenges. You can find those you could, you could Google Creative writing prompts or creative writing challenges and just kinda do those on your own. I think that makes for really good practice. Think about questioning. Excuse

me. The what, the who, when, where, how the why. Just kind of doing your own questioning may help you to develop ideas as well. And then of course, doing some research. If it is a topic that must be researched, you want to do that as soon as possible. Or if it's a, if it's a paper that, you know, you don't have to do any research on, you could kinda google some templates to find to get help with that as well. Okay. So then you want to just kind of start writing and some of the things that I have heard from many instructors. And that we try to really get students to think about, are these things that are listed here. So think about what your purpose is for writing. There are typically three main purposes for writing to argue, to inform, and to express. So think about how you want to communicate your ideas. And think about the purpose that you're trying to establish. Think about your audience, the reader, a lot of people, they think of an audience of one, of course that audience being their instructor. But when you're writing something, you don't want to just write to an audience of one, write to an audience of many. So I often tell my students, think about the people in this classroom, which I guess right now it's kind of hard since we're not really in a classroom much, but think about a large group, more than one person. Okay? Think about your topic that you're writing about. Think about the voice, the attitude, the stance that you want to show in your writing. Do you want to show, you know, that you take your topic seriously? Or do you want to kind of have a flipping attitude about it? That, that's really important when thinking about voice because you want to think about how serious or not your audience will take you. And then of course, think about your main idea or your thesis statement. Now notice that this something that I kind of delay because I think the students oftentimes get hung up on a perfect thesis statement when they have to write anything, in an essay or a larger scale paper? Yes, thesis statement is important, but I don't care what the high school teachers taught. A thesis statement does not have to be in the introduction. And I think that's something that as writing instructors hear at UCA that we, we try to get students to get out of that mentality that you have to have an explicitly stated thesis and that it has. Be in the introduction of your paper. Were you guys taught that in high, in high school, that you gotta have a thesis statement? And it has to be in the introduction? Yes, no? Yeah. Okay. So write, and then also rewrite K. Drafting. Just kinda write quickly and in, in spurts, you know, don't feel like you have to sit down and, and do an entire paper in one sitting. Break it up a little bit. Review your work, fill in gaps, and improve your writing as you go. Get feedback, except responses and constructive criticism from others. Anytime you have the opportunity to do some peer review, really take advantage of that. Revise your work, revise globally looking at the whole text, not being so worried about grammar, mechanics, spelling, not to say that those things aren't important punctuation. But really you want to think about. And I have an acronym that I like to use dealing with focus. So f is focus, organization, content, unity, and structure. Those are the things that you really want to focus on, okay? F-O-C-U-S. So think about the text as a whole and then focus more on those lower level issues, the sentence-level issues, ok. Edit and proofread. Make your writing clear, precise, and correct. Okay? You still need to proofread your work, alright, and then also I think that you should write every day, rewrites your lecture notes. If you take notes, you should rewrite your lecture notes. Keep a journal. Do some creative writing challenges. Write even to do lists, keep a calendar and just write for fun. Any of you write for fun? Anybody do that anymore? Does that help? I have one more thing for you. Hold on a second. Okay. Anybody write for fun? Uhh not really anymore, more just for class. Just for class? Sometimes I think if you just kinda take some time to do it out of a structured setting, it does become a little bit more enjoyable for you. Okay, this is something that I help the CWC put together. It's just some tips on what to do when you get stuck in your writing. I don't know if they have put this up on their website or not, but if they haven't, they should. This is a handout that when I have done this in person before, that I give to students. So the first

thing what to do when I don't know what to write. Of course, what I already said, do some free riding, do some brainstorming, some journaling will help what to do when my ideas are all mixed up. Put similar thoughts together to help organize them to see where you might need more or less. After you write a draft, See if you can outline what you have written. Or you might consider even outlining before you begin. Okay, check to see if you have a specific thesis for your paper or topic sentences for your paragraphs that keep main ideas clear and focused, underline main points. Okay. And this is a lot. I will send a copy of this to Mr. Williams and he'll have this if you guys would like to have your own copy. What to do and I know what to say, but I can't say it. You know, take some time away from it, come back later. Write the parts that you know, you can focus on, and then come back to the more difficult parts of your essay. Some students find it easier if they draft on the computer. I personally like to write things down. I like to see it out, scratch things out, scribble things out rewrite things. I mean, it works for me but do what works for you. What to do when I'm having trouble with my introduction. Maybe try to tell a story. Think about a way that you could possibly identify with your, your reader. It says here to begin with your thesis, that's if you're having trouble with your introduction, doesn't mean that you have to have a thesis in your introduction. But maybe if you know what the main idea of your paper is going to be, it may be a good idea to start with that. Okay? What do I do or what to do to back up what I say: Provide examples, give reasons, make comparisons. What to do when I don't know how to end something. Sum up what you've said and reflect on it. Explain the importance of what you've written, and with the point you want to re-emphasize anytime you do. And however, I don't recommend introducing new ideas because if it's not something that you've talked about in a paper, why would you want to end with that? Ok. What to do when I don't like my draft? I don't know how to change it. Find two changes that will improve your draft, walk away and come back. Don't edit too soon, focus on the content, not necessarily the editing. What to do if my draft is too sort. Use some examples, some explanations. If it's argumentative, try to incorporate opposing views to expand and illustrate each point. Check your introduction. Check to see if you brought closure to your ideas in the conclusion by reflecting on them and explaining their significance. What to do if my draft is too long. If it's too long that just means you probably got a lot of stuff in there that you just don't need. So they can give you some tips on how to think about things that just don't fit. And when thinking about length, I will tell you that most instructors are more concerned with quality, than quantity. We are not impressed with papers that are long in they say a whole lot of nothing. I would rather a student be brief and to the point, make good points, give good information, then give me a bunch of stuff that's not okay. And what to do when you have trouble finding and correcting mistakes. That's where that peer review really helps, getting some help. Because you can look at something 20 times and not see a problem that somebody else will. Okay. The other thing that I want to share with you are some common mistakes and I talked to, I'm going to say about ten, give me one second y'all, I talk to about ten instructors here and shoot. Okay. And they all gave me some points that they thought would be helpful concerning mistakes that they see first year writing students make. And I'm going to go through, I gotta laugh, but I'm not going to go through all of this. But I want you to kind of hear some of this. This actually comes from some of the teachers that you probably have had or currently have. Just kind of listen to some of these and see if you're guilty of these. And you know, maybe it's something that you could learn from. Okay, so this is one instructor. The things I see most frequently are that, that these, that this, a thesis that is too broad or abstract to be sufficiently supported in a three to five page essay because of course that's the typical length of our essays. They are of mine anyway. And this is someone that they did kind of focus on that thesis statement a little bit. You have too broad abstract of a thesis. So that means that you really need

to focus on narrowing the thesis statement, making it more concrete. Individual points in body paragraphs, don't have a clear relationship to one another. Claims that are unsupported or they have support that doesn't really match the claim. So I'm thinking that anytime that students purpose is to argue that they're not really supporting the claims that they're making. Ok, so that's what one instructor said. This one another instructor, she just said they're paying attention to audience, thinking about how to write so you get your message across as clearly as possible. Also, not using transitions between ideas, you kinda just move from one idea to the other without this smooth transition, I recommend if you know you struggle in this area just to kinda look up transitional words and phrases. I mean, there, Google, you can Google transitional words and phrases. Many of us use textbooks. In those textbooks they may have chapters on transitional words and phrases. So not having a smooth connection between paragraphs or between sentences is a problem. Another instructor said the most common mistakes. I see are students not taking enough time. They don't really revise on higher order problems like thinking through their ideas and what their audience knows and needs to know. Another. The problem with audience. They also don't ask for help when they need it. They try to push through and not bother us instead of coming to office hours and letting us read drafts. So once again, that's something that you really should take advantage of. Now the way that I have gotten around the whole office hours thing, and maybe some of your instructors have done this is to allow students to submit their drafts before it's due so that we can look over them. Google Docs is a great way to do that. I encouraged my students to share their work using Google Docs because it does kind of help you to get that feedback from your instructor before it's due, okay? He says that these are mistakes of process rather than product, but if students will follow the process, their product will get better, okay? Another instructor says, students who do poorly don't take advantage of drafting and revision opportunities that are built into process writing, okay? You know, you gotta go through the whole process. I'm going to skip because I think that says a lot of what the other instructor said. I right. Another common, most common student mistakes. This, this instructor looks at student mistakes and writing mistakes. So when the student is unsure about an assignment or is having difficulty, the student doesn't actually contact the instructor to ask questions or to ask for help, even when instructors can easily be reached via email, students often don't take advantage of that. Often communicating with the instructor and asking questions can make the difference in succeeding or not. And this is, is a problem to, and I'm starting to see this myself in my classes this semester. The student has a lot going on in his or her life due to personal problems, family emergencies right now, we've got this whole Covid pandemic, that's a real problem for many students. And the students just kinda disappears. Then two or three weeks later the student comes back, and now asks what can be done to catch up. At that point it's usually too late. Even if the instructor excuses the absences the student has missed so much that it will now be, be difficult to succeed. However, if the student had remained in communication with the instructor, instead of disappearing, possible arrangements could have been made for the student or to keep up with the work and still be in a position to succeed after the emergency situation was taken care of. I cannot emphasize that enough, communication is so important, because we are not psychics. We, when you disappear it says to us that you just don't want to be there. We don't know that you have some personal issues goin on, personal problems. We just know that you're not there. So that that is something that a lot of us that has nothing to do with writing, I know. But if that is a behavior that you're, you know, demonstrating then it is going to be hard for you to get to the, the, the other important stuff that is regards to writing. So that's really important, you know, across the board and in all your classes you have to communicate with your instructor, especially now with a lot of this whole pandemic keeping us apart. Ok, so then he got to

some of the common writing mistakes, believing that they should pay attention to grammar, punctuation, and editing even when they first write their draft. Once again, those things are important, but they aren't as important as you think they are. Having a perfectly edited paper is not as important as having content, organization and structure that makes the paper effective, okay? Alright, not understanding that writing is a process and that first drafts aren't wrong, they're just early steps in the writing process and the work simply isn't finished yet. And so he uses the analogy of sculpting. He says, I tell my students that when a sculptor first works on a big piece of rock, they don't start carving by fine details into it. First they take out big chunks to get the general form they want. Then later they start carving in fine details, when they first just hack off chunks the sculpture doesn't really look like anything. It would be a terrible finished sculpture. But the artist hasn't done anything wrong. This is just part of the process leading to that great final sculpture. It's necessary the first draft of a paper works in very much the same way. It's not wrong. It doesn't need to be corrected. It's an important step in the process, it's just not finished yet, okay? Of course, citation errors are a big problem that we see. There are a number of resources that will help you. I noticed just yesterday or day before that, even Google Docs now has a tool that will help you to incorporate your citations. Many of the databases in the library also have citation tools on them that will, that you can use and just put through the citation from the source directly into your paper that is not plagiarism by the way, that is being smart and using a resource available to you, K. Another problem he says is that students don't understand that writing is a conversation. And so a lot follows from this. They then don't understand that good, that a good introduction will often provide their readers with the conversation going on in the world. Specifically the conversation that they, the writer of the paper are responding to. They just jump into their thesis and the reader is left wondering, Okay, but why are you saying this? A lack of understanding of writing in conversation also leads students to use sources in limited ways, using them only as support for their point instead of using them to illustrate different perspectives and conversation. Okay. Whew. That's a long sentence, I'm gonna go on. Another thing he talks about is, you know, getting away from just the typical five paragraph essay. There's no rule. Maybe that's a high school rule. I don't know. There is no rule that says An Essay Has to be five paragraphs. And typically when they say five paragraphs, intro, three body, and a conclusion. I mean, Yeah. I don't I don't want to read those kind of essays and many of our instructors here don't want to read those either. So get away from that notion that there has to be a five paragraph essay. If you were taught that in high school, I'm not saying that it's wrong. But just get away from that. Okay. Oh, here's what I was saying earlier, believing that they must state their thesis in the first paragraph, always, no matter what. The more complex and thoughtful the student's main claim is, the more it often makes sense to wait until later to state the full thesis. Readers don't have enough information yet to understand their full point, but they stuff their full point into their first paragraph anyway, never a good idea. I think it's, I think it's really clever, if a student builds to their thesis statement, you know, you have all of these ideas that kind of work to create the thesis. Okay? Another good point he makes, and I've heard a lot of students say this as well. Thinking that any rule that they've learned about writing always applies regardless of the rhetorical context, audience, and purpose. For instance, never use "I". I once had a student write about his personal experience and the writing was really awkward in conference with him, I discovered that he thought he wasn't supposed to use I. I had to explain to him that if an instructor ever asked him to include his personal experience, that not only was it okay to use I, but it will be a really good idea to do so. Get away from the idea that you cannot use your own personal perspective or I in a paper, you can't use first-person and paper. I've heard students say that before. If you're writing narratively, if you're writing about something personal, how can you

get away with not using I? Who wants to read a paper that you wrote about yourself, but you wrote an entire person that makes no sense to me. And here's another thing, thinking that longer papers means having more points. This relates to the idea that one shouldn't spend more than one paragraph on a point. They don't realize that the volume of a paper typically comes through details, and in depth explanation, not from covering a lot more points all superficially. Ok. Once again, another instructor says looking for errors. That's something that, that they see as a problem. Students who narrowly focus on error, Once again, same thing. Once we get to late draft concerns that come from proofreading, students do not leave enough time before the deadline to focus on proof reading their work a number of times. If they did, they would begin to find some of the missing words and misspellings that we equate with undergraduate students tendency to make mistakes in their writing. Okay, so a lot of us say the same thing. Not taking breaks, not considering what revision really entails. Not reading assignments, not thinking about the reader. So as you can see, a lot of us have the same, have the same problems, or we see the same mistakes in student writing. And so these are things that maybe you should consider in your writing. Don't always be focused on if you have correct spelling, correct punctuation. Think about the overall content and effectiveness of your work before being concerned with those lower order considerations. Okay, so we still have what time is it over, 2:30? I wanted to leave time if you guys have any questions, anything I can kind of, oh and I forgot to put in my resources page one more thing. Hold on. Where's my you guys have any questions I can answer for you? Oh, yes. Okay. Do you mind putting up the CWC times. Yeah! I will put that up. When I get to share. Oh, I'm clicking the wrong button to share my screen. Okay. There it is. Can you see that? Yes ma'am, I just took a photo of it. I also have it to where you can go directly to their website. This is what their website looks like. And I think I think the hours may be a little different. So this is actually the correct the correct, the time. So they don't have Sunday. So it's Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 2:30 and then Tuesday and Thursday evening 6:00 to 9:00. So yeah, I didn't update that, but I'm glad I had that link up top so that I could just go to it. And they also give you some tips on how to schedule an appointment. They have online tutoring, tutorial, making an account with CWC. So and I do want you to know that anytime you have, anytime you have an appointment in the CWC, they do let the instructor know that you've had an appointment there and the things that they cover. So we are aware that you went to get help and the things that you you talked about. And I love when I get those emails because it lets me know that my students are listening. They're paying attention to my comments, to their papers. So when they go for those sessions, they said, this is what I need to work on. And then I get that email saying this is what we worked on. That, so that is always just they just I don't know, it does something gives me chills when I get those emails and I see that my students are taking the feedback that I give them and they are getting the help that they need. So I do encourage you, even if your instructors don't, I encourage you to go to the CWC for for not just for writing, for oral com. If you struggle with speaking in front of an audience, you know, you have to do, I don't know how they're doing speeches now, I guess they do them on zoom. But if you have, you know, fear of speaking in front of an audience. They will help you with that. They'll count that, one of the tutors said that they'll actually count the number of times you say something like, you know the word like or uhh. Sometimes we tend to do that when we're a little nervous. I even do it sometimes. But they will count those things, like if you say "uhh", if you say "but" if you say "like" a number of times, they'll count those and you'll be Wow, I didn't know I said that. Okay, okay. Okay, I do that. Sometimes I have a problem I'll talk with my hands more than I should and that's a problem. Any other questions? The last thing I wanted to show you what, the, because I did get some of this information, I'm gonna stop sharing for just a second so I can get to the right, Where is it? I wanted to get to the Helpful

Resources page really quick. I still struggle with zoom just a little bit. Okay. I said, okay, again, here is the, here is, here are the resources that I use. And then there is another, this, this web link right here is really good. I think they have a lot of helpful writing worksheets, I think there's something that UCA should do in our own writing center, but the OregonState.edu, I got some information from them. That's a really, really good website. So this, I don't know if this, if this film will be shared or if you guys will have a copy of this, okay? But I encourage you definitely to go to this party and, I just clicked on and I wasn't even trying to. But this one, as you can see here, they have a number of different PDFs and videos that will help you. And I'm sure we have something like this, right in our own student success website, but this is on there. I think. A different website, so yeah, I encourage you to take a look at that one as well. Okay. All right, guys. So I think that's about all I have. Do you have any question, other questions? I appreciate your attention. I appreciate you being here. I hope that I said something that was meaningful or helpful to get you to becoming better writers. How's your, how are your writing classes going? Eriel, how's your writing class going? It's going okay. Okay! Go. You're cool. Have you been doing your research this week? Yes ma'am. Okay, that's good. Anytime you're struggling now that you should always go to your instructor and get help. Alright, anything else? Looks like a poll is up, are they seeing this poll? Yeah, I just saw it. What kind of writing are you guys doing right now in your classes? Mainly like a self essay about yourself. Okay? Yeah, those are always easy when you can write about yourself. How many of you struggle when you have to write things that are not about yourself. You find more difficult when you're not writing about something personal. When you actually have to do the research. I wouldn't say it's hard, it's just time-consuming. Yeah, it is time consuming and that's where it's really important to think about how to manage your time. Because if you do have to do research, you don't want to wait until the last minute because that is when it becomes so tempting to plagiarize and when you just want to take something from that source and use it as your own. And I will tell you many of us, and I will say that this is campus, that we have learned over the years to distinguish between a student voice and an academic voice. So, we can tell when something is lifted from a source. So even if something has not submitted through SafeAssign or TurnItIn, or any of those, we can still tell because I usually don't even use a lot of those because I have come to know my students voices and I know what sounds like them, and what doesn't. I just want to say that as just a gentle warning to never turn something in that you know, you did not write yourself. Because chances are we know. If you get away with it one time, just know that, it will catch up with you because I have seen it in. Alright, that's all I got.