

Using WOnline for Synchronous Online Writing Consultations

While campus is closed for the rest of this semester, the Writing Commons is offering online consultations through <https://rit.mywconline.com/>. After registering for an account, students can schedule 50-minute sessions to work with a writing consultant on their writing at any stage of the writing process: brainstorming, organizing, researching, drafting, and revising.

The interface in WOnline has video, chat, and shared document functions. When students go to their appointment and click “Start or Join Online Consultation,” a new window with instructions will help orient them to the use of the interface.

This document discusses some best practices to make the most out of online appointments.

- ❖ **Establish Goals Early** – Because communication can take longer in an online environment, it’s important for the writer and consultant to make explicit plans and goals for the session. By working together toward a common goal, it can reduce the potential for miscommunication or lost time.
- ❖ **Talk About Access** – Writer should communicate to consultant about whether in-text commenting, video, or chat is their preferred mode of working (or a combination of all three). If, for instance, the video function is distracting, writer and consultant can switch cameras off and still use the microphone to talk. Unfortunately, at this time, the interface does not support real-time captioning.
- ❖ **Troubleshoot Together** – Don’t suffer in silence! If something doesn’t seem to be working, or someone doesn’t understand a function in the interface, communicate with one another and figure out how to make it work.
- ❖ **Shared Talk** – Ensure that the pace of communication between writer and consultant is equitable. If one or the other is having trouble following what’s being said, take a minute and review the conversation up to that point.
- ❖ **Slow Down** – It’s tempting to try to be as productive as possible in such a short time. But if feedback, suggestions, or questions are overwhelming, it’s hard to stay focused on what really matters.
- ❖ **Avoid Editing** – It’s tempting to get too focused on the text itself, and spend a lot of time making edits and rephrasing. Make sure to step back from the text occasionally and look at the bigger picture.
- ❖ **Make Plans** – A writing consultation isn’t the beginning and end of a writing process. Communicate about what the writer is going to do next, what other resources they can use, and what from the consultation is still unresolved or needs work.

The key in all of this is open, clear communication. This is new territory for most of us, but together, online appointments can be useful, constructive, and enjoyable. We look forward to working with you!

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