Getting Started
By Veronica Pantoja

Starting a writing project is sometimes a bit daunting. One writer, Gene Fowler, suggests: “Writing is easy: All you do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead.” Writing certainly does not need to be that painful or stressful. Using techniques to begin getting ideas on paper can help establish momentum to avoid feeling like you have to sit there in front of your jeering computer monitor until the brilliant idea miraculously appears in your head (along with those drops of blood!).

One of the first steps in completing a writing project is determining the goals for your paper. Typically, writing assignments provide some context for your topic idea. However, it’s up to you to establish your point of view and main ideas about the topic and how those things fit within the context of the paper. To begin, you may first want to ask yourself:

1. Who is your reader?
2. What is your purpose in writing the paper?
3. Who are you, the writer? (What image or persona do you want to project?)

After establishing some of those considerations, you can begin to plan your writing, brainstorm ideas, and begin writing. However, beginning a project is sometimes only half the battle. How do you keep momentum going to finish a project successfully? It’s important to remember that writing is a recursive process; that is, it’s part of a sequence of activities, a back and forth of ideas and writing. A sequence of activities that can help you engage in your ideas can also help you get started. The most important strategy for “getting started”? Just get started! Here are some other strategies:

• Set a timer for 5 - 10 minutes, and write for the entire time. Aim to write anything that is even slightly related to your topic. It’s OK to set down your thoughts and feelings about approaching this writing task; write, “I’m not sure I like this” until other ideas about your topic come to mind.
• Ask a friend to listen while you talk about your writing project and the ideas you plan to convey to your reader. Then go to your computer and start writing.
• Take a handful of 3” x 5” index cards and write your ideas on them, one per card. Arrange and rearrange your cards in an order that makes sense. Add ideas as they occur to you. Then tape the cards to a large sheet of paper and fill in the details around each idea. Very often, the ideas on the cards become headings.

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Dear Grammar Goddess:

PEOPLE, PEOPLES and PERSON - what is the difference in these words and when should each word be used?

Signed,
Census Bureau Worker, Gilbert

Dear CBW:

Generally, “people” is the plural of “person.” “Peoples” can refer to a group or groups of culturally defined groups, as in the “peoples of eastern Europe.” The choice between “people” and “persons” is not always easy, though. There used to be a rule that "persons" is used when speaking of a number of people who can be counted and “people” is used when speaking of a large or uncounted number of individuals.

- There are fifteen persons on this committee but three hundred million people in the United States.
- We can put twelve persons in each lifeboat.
- How many people visit this mall every year?

However, according to The New Fowler’s Modern English Usage, the plural form "persons" is slowly retreating, and people is now widely used in whatever circumstance we need the plural of "person."

(Source: http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/faq.htm)
Speak to Me!
A new column celebrating the CGCC community.

Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me, why should you not speak to me? And why should I not speak to you?

So asked American poet Walt Whitman in his classic collection, *Leaves of Grass*. In the spirit of Whitman, who celebrated human camaraderie in his work, the Writing Center is launching this new column to help the CGCC community know each other a little better!

So let’s meet Veronica Pantoja, new English faculty who joined the CGCC family in fall 2003. With over fifteen years of teaching and tutoring experience, Veronica has learned that teaching English can be a “tough sell” for a lot of students. “I want them to have a little fun, in the classroom and in their writing,” says Veronica. “I try to be funny and encourage them to talk, then teach them to bring that same energy into their papers.”

Veronica loves teaching because she gets to meet new people every semester and hear their personal stories and life perspectives. It’s always rewarding, says Veronica, when she can help a new or nervous student become more comfortable and confident in college. But she’s been particularly impressed with the student population here at CGCC. “Students seem to be really goal-oriented here,” she observes. “I like being part of the chain that helps them reach their goals.”

Veronica realizes that while many of her students may be new to college, none are inexperienced. “They’ve been writing all their lives,” she says. “I’m just here to teach new strategies and techniques.” Veronica works hard to make her classes interesting and enjoyable for students, but ultimately she believes her students decide how much they’ll gain from her class. “If you just come in with a good attitude, you’ll get much more than what you put into it.”

Veronica received her Bachelor of Arts in English and Master of Arts degree in English from Corpus Christi State University (now Texas A&M). She moved to Arizona in 1997 to begin her Doctor of Philosophy in English at Arizona State University which she expects to receive in 2005. In addition to serving as the Faculty Liaison for the Writing Center, Veronica is also teaching ENG 101 courses this semester in classroom and online formats.

The Mysteries of the English Language

There’s no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple.

English muffins weren’t invented in England or French fries in France.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don’t fing, grocers don’t groce and hammers don’t ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn’t the plural of booth beeth? One goose, two geese. So one moose, two meese? One index, two indices?

If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn’t preacher praught?

If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

If you wrote a letter, perhaps you bote your tongue?

Sometimes I think all the English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?

Have noses that run and feet that smell?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

How can the weather be hot as Hell one day and cold as Hell another?

How you noticed that we talk about certain things only when they are absent? Have you ever seen a horseful carriage or a strapful gown? Met a sung hero or experienced requited love?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling out and in which an alarm clock goes off by going on.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race (which, of course, isn’t a race at all). That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible. And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this list, I end it!

(Source: http://www.jokecenter.com/jokes/Education/7611.htm)
Meet Your New Tutors

Josh Bartlett is still adjusting to the weather and being so far from the ocean, having grown up in Maryland and having recently moved to Arizona from Brooklyn. In addition to tutoring at CGCC’s Writing Center, he teaches at MCC and SMCC. He received his Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Writing from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and his Master of Arts in English from Brooklyn College, where his thesis was titled “Really A New Poetry”: Examining Various Influences on the Heroic-Expansive Line as a Precursor to Reading Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl.”

Marlene Montgomery, a 1998 CGCC graduate, recently earned her MA in English from ASU. An experienced volunteer and private tutor, Marlene finds working with students both challenging and rewarding. She looks forward to talking with CGCC students about the struggles of filling white space and the satisfaction of writing well. She claims that it’s a rare occurrence to come across a writing blunder she hasn’t committed. Most of her quality free time is spent traveling with her husband, reading, and writing.

Kirsti Cole is a PhD student and teaching associate in Rhetoric, Composition and Linguistics at Arizona State University. She began her college career at CGCC in January of 1998 and is happy to be returning to such a great environment, though it is now much bigger than the 4 building campus that she first attended. At ASU, she teaches in the Writing Program and loves working with both students and teachers to develop effective, efficient and hopefully enjoyable strategies and approaches to the writing process.

Josh Rathkamp, Son of Sir Walter Rathkamp of Longer Island, New York, was born and raised on a sheep farm in Northern Ireland, in a double-wide trailer in the back of a junk yard (owned by a distant uncle), and left to fend for himself, eventually making his home in Arizona by obtaining groupie status for the professional circuit of speedwalkers, which he has followed through 33 states, starting in Arkansas. He currently teaches Composition at Arizona State University and dabbles in writing poetry about his former escapades.

I took a speed reading course and read ‘War and Peace’ in twenty minutes. It involves Russia.

-- Woody Allen

Did You Know?

Here are some commonly misspelled and misused words and some tips for remembering their correct spellings!

acceptable The suffix (pronounced –êbl) causes problems with this word—sometimes spelled -ible, some times -able. Just remember to accept any table offered to you and you will spell this word OK.

accommodate Remember, this word is large enough to accommodate both a double “c” AND a double “m”.

affect/effect Here’s an acronym to help you remember the difference between these commonly misused and misspelled words: R A V E N (Remember: Affect Verb Effect Noun)

a lot Two words! Hopefully, you won’t have to allot a lot of time to this problem.

calendar The “e” is surrounded by two “a”s.

grammar You’ll just have to remember this one! It’s not spelled with an “e.”

its/it’s The apostrophe marks a contraction of “it is.” Something that belongs to it is “its.”

lose/loose “Loose” is an adjective; “lose” is a verb (indicates when you don’t win or when you’ve lost something). “Lose” loses its other “o.”

misspell Just remember “mis” + “spell.”

their/they’re/there They’re all pronounced the same but spelled differently. “Their” shows possession ("their" house), and the contraction of “they are” is "they're." Everywhere else, it is "there."

(Source: http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/misspelled.html)