

Writing Spaces

Assignments & Activities Archive

Towards Self-assessing Writing beyond Writing
Center Consultations

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Towards Self-assessing Writing beyond Writing Center Consultations

Saurabh Anand

Overview

This activity sheet's idea and its relevance in the writing center consultation mushroomed from my English composition teaching days to my (multilingual) students. In between drafts, I often invited my students to reflect on the writing they produced to intentionally let them self-access to intentionally let them self-access their writing growth over time during different stages in the semester. However, such reflections were often descriptive, where I would guide students' thinking via response questions. This activity sheet does the same thing at the core but provides my students a visual interpretation of what they have changed in their writing between drafts by offering them a tool and process for analyzing their writing. I firmly believe a similar version of this activity could extend to writing center consultations.

When a tutee comes in for the consultation seeking essay organizational-related mentorship, for example, I always request them to make a copy of the writing that they would use for the writing consultancy. I do so because usually, the tutee makes changes in their writing during the consultation. Then, after I help them, I could provide this activity sheet (Appendix). Performing the activity's steps, the writer would be able to assess the visual of the changes they made in the drafts before and after writing consultation for future reference using Microsoft Word's 'compare feature.' Facilitating this activity sheet further iterates the writing center's core mission as a university resource: helping writers of various fluency levels to (formatively) develop their writing skills. Such activity provides agency to tutee/writer to take and retain the ownership of their own writing during and post writing consultation in collaboration with tutors. I

would like to remind readers that this activity works in the classroom too.

Time Commitment

Though the reflection could take longer, the actual activity should not take more than one writing center session. In my context, it is usually for 45 minutes.

Materials

A computer/laptop with Microsoft Word version 2013 and above. I will be using Microsoft Word Version 16.61 to explain the activity.

Activity Process

- Students will open a blank document on Microsoft Word
- Next, click 'Review' in the top menu bar and click on the drop-down arrow next to 'Compare' on the right. There will be two options. Click on 'Compare Documents.' After clicking 'Compare Documents,' a box should appear.
- Finally, upload the most recent draft on the right-hand side [under the Revised Document] and the older draft on the left-hand side [under Original Document] by clicking on the icons. Click OK to finish.
- Now writers can see the language and content changes they have made across drafts (from older to newer). These changes might include what they have deleted, adding new words to the document, other word-by-word edits, and formatting changes.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity/assignment will:

- Gain an understanding of how their writing has evolved between drafts
- Think critically about writing as a process over a product
- Develop a sense of writing agency via technology.

Learning Accommodations

- This is an activity student could do either on their own as a classroom activity or go to the writing center to work through with a writing consultant.
- Many writing programs have portfolio requirements at the end of the semester. After an academic essay genre concludes, this activity could help emerging writers document their overall development in the academic writing course. Via this activity, they could feel equipped to elaborate on what they learned, unlearned, or experimented with throughout the course relatively quickly.
- Given the writing center initiatives must be tech-savvy due to the ongoing pandemic, this activity could also be done during a virtual synchronous writing consultancy.

Further Reading

Balthazor, Ron, et al. "What? So What? Now What? A Decade of Writing EPortfolios at the University of Georgia.," edited by Mary Ann Dellinger and D. Alexis Hart, WAC Clearinghouse, 2020, pp. 11–33.

Swihart Jewell, Megan, and Cheatle, Joseph. *Redefining Roles: The Professional, Faculty, and Graduate Consultant's Guide to Writing Centers*. University Press of Colorado, 2021.

Appendix: Activity Sheet

Self-Assess Your Writing Improvement

Are you also someone who sometimes has a hard time finding out what you have changed in your recent draft from the previous one?

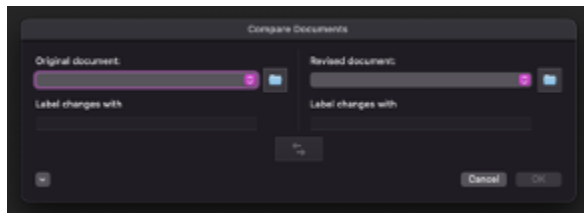
Don't worry! It happens with all of us. We have a solution for you!

Microsoft Word allows you to compare your latest draft and the previous draft on the same screen by comparing two documents on a screen simultaneously.

How?

Step 1: Open a blank document on Microsoft Word

Step 2: Click 'Review' in the top menu bar and click on the drop-down arrow next to 'compare.' You will see two options, click on 'Compare Documents.' Once you click on the 'Compare Documents,' you should be able to see a box similar to below.



Step 3: You will now upload the most recent draft on the right-hand side [Revised Document] and the previous draft on the left-hand side [Original Document] by clicking on the icons. Click OK.

What will you see on the screen?

Microsoft Word will highlight all the changes you made in the most recent draft document from the previous one and show them to you in a track changes format.

Please Note: Please ensure you have selected the "Reviewing" option to see specific revisions you made in your latest draft.