

English 1A Learning Outcomes Statement, Riverside Community College

Upon successful completion of the course, students should achieve competency in the following five areas:

Critical Reading and Analysis: Students should be able to

- **Analyze college-level texts.** “College-level texts” are likely to be expository or argumentative, typically ones of intrinsic value, directed at advanced readers. They should ordinarily be more substantial and more demanding than articles from newspapers or national news magazines. Students should be able to read for the literal meaning of a text: discovering its thesis or main idea, defining its audience and purpose, outlining its methods of development, and evaluating the strength of its evidence (when appropriate). But students will also be able to read “against the grain” of such texts, becoming aware of how writers make meaning through language and how readers interact with texts in order to create meaning. Reading across the grain involves awareness that multiple legitimate interpretations of rich texts are almost always possible, and that strong readers change their minds about the meaning of such texts (and are themselves changed through the process of thinking about such texts) over time. It means a form of active reading in which students discover problems in what they read, questions about what they read, and relationships among the things they read.

Writing Academic Prose: Students should be able to

- **Write longer and more complex essays than they did in 50A, built from a combination of several rhetorical patterns, that pursue answers to challenging questions or advance substantial arguments.** Essays are likely to be expository or argumentative, usually reflecting the student’s critical engagement with a text or series of texts. They are usually thesis-driven, stating and defending a position that reflects the writer’s analysis of texts, but they may be exploratory, in which writers test hypotheses, examine multiple possible solutions to problems or multiple possible answers to problems.
- **Organize such essays effectively so that they possess both unity and coherence.**
- **Support claims effectively, with relevant, thoughtful, and sufficient evidence drawn (as appropriate) from written texts and the writer’s own experience and knowledge.**
- **Quote effectively and correctly to illustrate points and support claims.** Students should be able to choose passages to quote thoughtfully, vary quotation length and type, integrate quotations into their essays grammatically, and use conventions like ellipses and brackets to help render quotations intelligible to readers.
- **Employ the conventions of written English to produce intelligible essays almost entirely free from errors in syntax, grammar, punctuation, diction, and spelling.**

Rhetorical Knowledge: Students should be able to

- **Write essays in several different genres (e.g., expository, argumentative, exploratory, and/or personal, etc.).**

- Write essays to several different kinds of audiences and become aware of the ways in which audience affects writing.
- Write essays that adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality.
- Write essays that employ the standard methods of academic discourse (including effective introductions and conclusions; transitions, topic sentences and summative sentences at paragraph end) for guiding readers through an analysis or argument. Academic writing is marked by clear patterns of movement between concrete and abstract, general and particular; its conventions dictate the explicit marking of logical relationships between sentences, paragraphs, and parts of an analysis or argument. Students will be able to demonstrate competence in employing these organizational patterns and signals.

Research: Methods and Conventions: Students should be able to

- Recognize, through the process of completing one, that a college-level research paper is fundamentally different from a high school report. It is likely to be an analysis of a complex problem or issue, perhaps an argumentative paper that weighs evidence and defends a position. Its focus is narrow enough to enable the writer to achieve some degree of mastery of the topic in the month or two she has to devote to it.
- Gather sources effectively, evaluating them for relevance and reliability. Students should become familiar with ways of retrieving source material available through the RCC library, on the Internet, and elsewhere (as appropriate for specific topics).
- Employ a system for managing the research process so it leads to a thoughtful and intelligible paper. This is likely to mean learning how to annotate and take notes as one reads, perhaps in a notebook or on note cards. It is likely to mean consideration of strategies for organizing and outlining the paper before writing it, and then writing it as (and in) a system of logical parts that can be assembled into a coherent whole.
- Employ MLA conventions to cite sources. Students should be able to employ correctly the MLA system of parenthetical citations with a Work(s) Cited section in essays that employ or analyze source material.
- Employ sources effectively in the finished paper. This means that all significant supportable claims in the paper have supporting evidence drawn from relevant, legitimate sources. Whenever possible, claims that are especially critical for the success of the paper have multiple pieces of supporting evidence, drawn from different sources. Students will therefore learn to synthesize material from multiple sources within individual parts of the paper.

Awareness of Writing Processes: Students should be able to

- Recognize that writing is a process, that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete an effective piece of writing.
- Critique their own work (both thinking and writing) and the work of others.