

Being a Course WA

The Course WA Program is designed to provide an audience for student writing beyond the professor and to help students improve their writing process. Each semester, 20-25 professors elect to use WAs with their courses. Through the Course WA Program, faculty members ask their students to submit drafts of papers so that the students' writing can benefit from the revision process, and students find that using Course WAs benefits their writing process.

There are several steps to follow in order to be successful as a Course WA. This section walks you through the process of Course WAing from the perspective of the WA.

Expectations of Course WAs

Students and faculty will have different expectations for you as a Course WA. The program expects that you will:

- Work with as many as 15 students in a semester (average load is 12). The number of students will be determined by the number of times a professor requires students to meet with their WAs.
- Maintain clear communication with the professor you have been assigned to work with for the semester. This means responding to emails, attending meetings, and sharing what is going on with your WAing.
- Pick up and distribute student papers in a timely manner. Currently the program is designed to give WAs 7-10 days to read student papers and conference. If you are unable to meet this schedule you should notify the program director and your Course WA Professor ASAP.
- Read and comment on student papers before the conference. If the student gives you his paper before the conference, you should not be reading it for the first time at the conference. Make it clear to WAees if you are rereading their papers right before the conference so they do not assume you are unprepared for their conference.
- Set up conferences with students. This means getting a sign-up sheet to the professor, reminding students of their appointment time and where you will meet, and being on time for your conferences.
- Be professional. How you interact as a WA reflects on the entire program. Being on time and prepared for conferences as well as maintaining your composure during difficult situations are essential to the process. If you are having any problems, feel free to contact the program director, the professor for the course, or any of the student coordinators.

Course WA Assignments

The program director is responsible for matching WAs with requests from faculty. Once all requests are in from faculty, the program director makes assignments, taking as many WA preferences into consideration as possible. Remember these are only preferences, and based on

faculty requests you may not be able to get your desired assignment every semester you WA. In addition to preferences, the director also looks at the courses you have taken to see where you would be best matched. The program director tries to avoid placing students in a discipline in which they have not taken any courses.

Once assignments are made, the program director notifies the WAs and Course WA Professor. At this point, you are asked to confirm via email with the director that your assignment will work for you. Reasons why it may not be a suitable assignment are:

You are enrolled in the course.

You have never taken a course in that discipline and feel completely unprepared to WA for that course.

You have WAed that course before and need a change.

The program director will try to accommodate your request for a new assignment, but this is not always possible. Once you confirm your assignment, the next step is to get in touch with the professor you will be working with for the next semester.

Communication with the Professor

Getting in touch with the professor

You should contact the professor you have been assigned to work with during the first week of the semester. Professors differ in terms of preferred modes of communication, so be prepared to try email, voicemail, and office visits in order to schedule your first meeting. If you cannot reach the professor after one week, let the WA program director know immediately. Some departments will schedule the first meeting with Course WAs themselves. If you are WAing for such a department, it is your responsibility to be at all scheduled meetings or, if absolutely necessary, to contact the department immediately and arrange alternate plans.

It is essential to meet with the professor early in the semester. Setting a precedent for clear and frequent communication will prove invaluable when small problems arise during your Course WA work.

First meeting

Be prompt and prepared at your first meeting. Before you begin, you should know what information you will need. Some professors may have a clear idea of the role of WAs in the context of their courses. If this is the case, listen carefully to the professor, make sure you understand what she wants, and be sure that it coincides with your understanding of what Course WAs do. A professor might have a firm, but mistaken, notion that WAs grade papers or act as teaching assistants. Try to clarify the program for these professors, and if confusion persists, contact the WA program director for assistance. Some professors may have no sense of the WA Program and will ask for an explanation. Be sure that you are comfortable providing one, and then ask some of the following questions:

- How many papers will the students in this course be writing?

- How many papers will I be working on with them?
It's possible that the professor will not have you work with the students on all of their papers. Some professors want to see the first assignment to get an idea of the level of their students' writing while others will make it optional to meet with a WA for the final assignment.
- How many students are in the course?
- When are each of the papers due?
During this time the professor may have flexibility in scheduling due dates. Know your schedule before meeting with the professor so that you can negotiate any conflicts.
- How much time have you scheduled between the "Rough Draft Due Date" and the "Final Draft Due Date"?
The program requests that faculty have at least a week between the two due dates. This gives you time to read and conference with the students and for the students to revise. If the professor has a shorter turnaround time, explain how the process will be more effective if you and the students are given more time between due dates.
- When might I come in to introduce myself to the class?
WAs are strongly encouraged to attend one class to introduce themselves and briefly explain the WA process. By having the WA attend a portion of class the professor sends the message of the importance of the WA process. This visit also ensures that the students know who you are when they come for their conference. There are guidelines for what to cover during that visit at the end of this section.
- What is your policy on missed writing conferences?
Encourage the professor to set this policy so that you don't have to. Remind him/her that you too are a student and it places you in an awkward position to have to decide how to report missed conferences. Some professors will suggest you send their paper via campus mail while others will ask to be informed of missed conferences. Suggest that the professor inform his/her students of the policy. This way you are just enforcing rather than creating the policy.
- What is your procedure for students signing up for conferences?
The process works best if the professor is the one to collect the drafts. Ask the professor how far in advance does he/she want a conference sign-up sheet. Confirm how you will retrieve the papers and sign-up sheet. Suggest that the professor make a copy of the conference sign-up sheet to place on his/her door for those students who forget when they scheduled a conference.
- What is the procedure for late papers?
There will be times where a professor will grant a student an extension. You need to clarify with the professor how this will impact the WA process. Some professors will require late papers go through the Writing Center while others will expect the Course WA to adjust his/her schedule. Explain to the professor how a steady stream of late papers adds challenges to your schedule as a student. Because emergencies arise you should be flexible enough to handle some late papers, but discuss with the professor what is a reasonable timeline for all involved.

Handle these logistical details right away to avoid potential pitfalls throughout the semester. If the professor schedules three days between the rough and final draft due dates, your work as a WA will be impossible or irrelevant. If you don't come in to the class to introduce yourself, the students may tend to see you as a less-than-integral part of their course work, and they will be less likely to take full advantage of your assistance. Also be careful to what you agree to because you may be setting up a precedent that your colleagues will not be able to follow in subsequent semesters. The suggested structure exists to make the process as efficient as possible for all involved.

The first meeting is also a chance to address the professor's substantive writing goals for her students. Make sure you understand the professor's stance on the writing issues most relevant or salient in the course. If you do, you will be able to provide assistance to students that complements, rather than contradicts, the professor's own agenda and guidance. Consider employing the following questions to clarify the professor's position:

- What writing problems have you seen in this course in the past?
- Do students generally have trouble grasping the basic concepts?
- Are they able to understand, but unable to structure, the course material presented in their essays?
- What are your "writing pet peeves"?
- If students could strengthen only one or two writing skills in this course, which ones would you have them be?

Finally, go over the first assignment you will be working on, and be sure that you are very clear on what the professor expects. Try to clarify any ambiguities you encounter; if you don't understand what the professor is asking for, it is likely that your WAees won't either. It's possible that the discussion of the first assignment may take place in a separate meeting.

Follow-up meetings

After your initial meeting, it is a good idea to meet briefly with the course professor before receiving each new batch of papers. In the week before each new assignment is given, meet to go over the assignment, clarify any ambiguities, and ask which aspects of the assignment are the most important. Do not be apprehensive about contacting the professor to make appointments. You and your WAees will benefit from your initiative.

Meetings with the professor are valuable opportunities to ask for feedback on your last round of WAing. Find out if you did a particularly good job with something so you can make sure to do it again. Ask about the professor's overall impression of the papers, and discuss any particular cases. For example, a professor may let you know what aspect of writing a particular student could use more support with during the next round.

Share your experiences working with the students with the course professor. Were there common stumbling blocks on the last assignment? Did students voice particular concerns? Did you conference with any students who seemed to have extensive problems? Alert the professor to any missed conferences if they expressed a desire to be informed. If, after your follow-up meeting, you have difficulty understanding an assignment or you come across a problem that you

can't address, contact the professor. Continued communication between you and the professor is not a formality – it's essential!

Challenges working with professors

At some point over the semesters, it is possible that you will run into some challenges working with a faculty member to whom you are assigned. You might receive a batch of papers to WA at an unexpected time, have trouble getting feedback from the professor, or even be asked to grade your WAees' papers. The most important thing to do is to try to identify the problem, and to do so in a calm and professional manner. You can begin by asking yourself:

Is the problem a matter of miscommunication?

Is the problem due to the professor being misinformed about the WA Program?

Is the professor misusing the WAs (perhaps owing to her misguided expectations)?

In most cases, you will find that the problem is simply a matter of miscommunication. In such cases, the natural course of action is to contact the professor as soon as possible. It will be easier if you can give your professor the benefit of the doubt—chances are she is exceptionally busy too, and it is also possible that she has never worked with WAs before. You can always meet with the program director for some advice.

In other cases, you might find that your professor is misinformed about the WA Program and has false expectations. Some faculty members are new to the program, while others have used WAs for over a decade. Yet both, for different reasons, might have various misperceptions of what a WA is and what a WA does. Keep in mind that the program has changed dramatically over the past 20+ years. The simplest remedy is to explain the role of the Course WA to the professor and clearly delineate the parameters of the program. Try to explain the program using positive examples (for example, instead of saying, "Look, it's not right to think I can WA 15 papers overnight," you might say, "We've found that it usually takes about three to four days to read over the papers in a thorough, satisfactory manner.") If for some reason you find the situation too awkward, or you think that you aren't getting through to the professor, consider asking the WA program director to help out.

In some rare situations a professor might ask you to assume inappropriate duties, such as grading papers. If the professor does not readjust her view of your responsibilities after a brief explanation, you should speak directly with the program director. You should not feel like you are "tattling" by contacting the program director. The program director is not the professor's boss, so you are not reporting the professor to her superiors.

Preoccupation

Sometimes the demands of the semester might make it difficult for the course professor to plan a useful and productive role for WAs in his course. In such cases, you might find yourself not receiving much guidance or having unproductive, brief meetings. You might bring this to your professor's attention by framing your requests and inquiries in terms of making the WA-student collaboration as beneficial as possible for students. The professor might not have considered how valuable his feedback on your WAing can be for the outcomes of the Course WA process.

Vague expectations

A common challenge in Course WAing is ascertaining exactly what your professor expects from student writers. Sometimes she will have trouble articulating what constitutes “good writing” in that discipline. When this is the case, the students are not likely to be well-informed of the professor’s expectations. However, regardless of whether the professor’s expectations are known, these expectations will be the criteria used to evaluate student papers. Thus, it is important for you to tease out the professor’s expectations. Students in the course should clearly be involved in this process as well, but keep in mind that your work will frustrate both the students and the professor if it does not reflect an understanding of the professor’s expectations.

One approach to this challenge is to ask the professor what constitutes a “strong” paper in the discipline and what constitutes a “weak” one. This question should lead to some constructive discussion about what level of writing is expected in the course and what conventions of the discipline should be adhered to in the course. Another approach is to ask for any sample papers from the course that are either notably strong or notably weak. By looking at these, you should be able to get a better sense for how your professor conceptualizes “good writing,” and you can follow up on what you see in the papers with specific and well-directed questions. Finally, try asking about any “pet peeves” your professor has. This question will help you get a sense of the level of detail the professor attends to in evaluating students’ written work.

Sudden surprises

Sometimes your best efforts at communication with the professor will still leave you in a bind. Imagine this Saturday afternoon surprise: fifteen papers crammed in your mailbox out of nowhere and the note from the professor reads: conferences should start on Tuesday!

If you met with the professor in person at the start of the semester and forgot about the agreed-upon schedule, then the burden is on you to make adjustments to your schedule and WA the papers on time. If, instead, the problem results from your professor moving a paper’s deadline up or adding a paper to the course (and somehow forgetting to notify you), then you need to contact the professor immediately. In this scenario it is only fair that you be allowed to work out a different arrangement. Be honest with your professor about what you can and cannot accomplish. Do not shy away from being firm. If the professor refuses to be flexible after you approach her calmly and reasonably, you should contact the program director.

Poor assignments

If you find that a significant number of your WAees are frustrated or confused by an assignment or seem to have missed the point of the assignment, chances are that it was either poorly designed or there was some form of communication breakdown. Sometimes what is articulated about an assignment in class is at odds with what the professor writes on an assignment sheet. You might begin by probing the problem in conversations with WAees, asking what they thought of the assignment, what was said in class, and about any confusion that had arisen. If many WAees seem confused, and you conclude that the problem lies in the assignment, not in

one or two students' interpretations of the assignment, then you should bring this confusion to the professor's attention. If the professor makes any changes in the assignment, it is important that you are made aware of any new information communicated to the students.

Communication with Students

Communication with the students is equally important. You will be working with many students who have different schedules and different expectations and goals for working with a WA. There are some concrete aspects to the program that you should follow, but as mentioned, you will need to evaluate all of the students in order to address their needs.

Scheduling conferences

In most Course WA assignments you will be responsible for conferencing with students for each round of papers. The number of papers you will conference with students will be determined by the professor with some input from you as the WA.

Either before or after you have read and commented on the papers, you will need to circulate a sign-up sheet of conference times. When you provide a sheet, the professor should circulate it for you during class. Some WAs like to pass around the sheet themselves, so that they can introduce themselves to the class and dispel any anxieties about the process. We recommend that, whenever possible, you attend the class before the first conference so that students know who you are and what your role is in the course. Afterwards, posting the sign-up sheet in a common location allows both you and the WAees to refer back to it if need be. Many WAs like to put a copy of their conference times on the professor's office door or ask the professor to post it on Blackboard. Your sign-up sheet should include the following:

Your Name

Your Extension or cell phone number

Your Email

Conference Location

List of conference times

Request (at each conference time slot) for student's name, extension and email

Common locations for WA conferences are Kohlberg coffee bar, Science Center Commons, Parrish Parlors, Trotter 3rd floor lounge, and the first floor of Cornell Library. A distracting environment can really detract from your attentiveness and the WAee's ability to focus, so consider your conference spot carefully. Unless your spot isn't productive, be consistent about where you meet throughout the semester so that students can find you easily. You should never hold conferences in your room.

Schedule your conferences as soon as possible after you receive the papers, so that the assignment is fresh in everyone's mind. Make extra timeslots on your sign-up sheet, and offer to schedule additional times in order to accommodate busy schedules. It is helpful to block your conferences together, for efficiency and so that WAees will be able to find you around the time of your meeting. However, also build breaks into your schedule. After the third or fourth

conference you may start to lose focus. Take a couple hours to break should help you to refocus and reenergize. Leave enough time between slots: typical conferences last 30-40 minutes, depending on the length of the papers. To be safe, scheduling appointments 45 minutes apart should leave enough time for what needs to take place in a conference. If someone seems to want or need an extended period of time you may suggest that she signs up for a double timeslot.

Before the appointments

Contact your WAees again via email as the appointments draw near. When you contact your WAees to give reminders, restate the appointment time, appointment location, and your personal contact information. At this point, if you have read the papers you may also want to give the student some idea of your response to their paper in order to alleviate anxiety and/or allow the student to process your ideas so that they will come to the conference prepared with questions or suggestions.

Arrive early for your first appointment. Have your brown WA envelope or the student's paper clearly visible to help your WAees recognize you. If you have access to Cygnet or Facebook, look up the students you don't know so you can recognize them.

If a WAee is late for the appointment, leave a voicemail with your name, extension, and the appointment location.

Responding to students' writing

Working with Course WAees requires two main tasks. First, you need to respond to students' papers with written comments, and then you need to conference with them in order to begin the revision process together.

The main difference between responding to student writing in a course WA assignment versus in the Writing Center is that there is most likely time built into the course for revision. This means that the student may have more time to work on the course paper than when he shows up in the Writing Center a day or two before the paper is due. Besides the possibility of more time, it is also important that you keep in mind the professor's guidelines. For example, what are the goals of her assignment, and how has the student accomplished those goals from a writing perspective? Some professors provide WAs with a checklist for areas to look for in the students' writing. These lists are not meant to turn the WA into an editor or grader only looking for micro-level features of a text, but rather to serve as a guideline for what the professor considers important in the writing of a particular assignment. The WA can provide written comments that point out particular aspects of a student's writing that do not match the expectation of the professor, but will improve the student's writing beyond the assignment.

Interpreting an assignment

A WA becomes incredibly useful for a student when he assesses whether the student has answered the posed assignment or not. Because of conversations you may have had with the professor, you should have a clear understanding of the writing task and what she considers to be a well-written paper. For example, you are WAing for an introductory English course and you

know the professor would like the students to analyze a particular theme in a text. In discussions you have with the professor, she mentions that she isn't looking for a summary of the text but rather a close textual analysis. In reading the students' papers, the comments you provide should address this issue of analysis. Questions to think about: "Does the paper have analysis or is it mainly summary?" "Is the student providing examples to support her analysis?" "How well-argued is the analysis?" No matter what level the paper is at this may be one way to focus your written comments.

Try reading all of the papers at once without making any comments. This will help you understand what kind of interpretations and approaches the students as a group use and what kind of errors they may have in common. If many students make the same, subtle mistake, you can develop a particularly clear way of explaining the problem and share it with all the WAees. In working with a single paper, read it without commenting to get the gist of the argument. Then read it again slowly and you'll be able to respond to macro issues, like logic and argument throughout the paper, rather than just in your notes at the end.

Challenges working with Course WAees

Missed Appointments

For many reasons, students may fail to come to a conference. If the WAee has a legitimate reason (e.g. illness, family emergency) or if he made a valiant effort to contact you, we ask that you allow the WAee to reschedule. If a student misses more than one appointment, feel free to contact the professor and ask her how you should return the paper to the student. In your initial meeting with the professor you should discuss the policy for missed conferences. If students know that the professor values the conference process, they are less likely to miss the conference. Whenever you have a question about where to draw the line in rescheduling conferences, contact either the professor of the course or the program director.

There are several practical things you can do to help reduce the number of missed conferences.

- Make sure your conference sign-up sheet provides information on contacting you. It also doesn't hurt to include a reminder to WAees to notify you if any last-minute, unavoidable scheduling conflicts arise.
- Make sure the location of your conferences is written in a conspicuous place. First-time WAees do not think to write down the location, or they assume the conference will be in the classroom where the class meets or in the Writing Center.
- Try to send your WAees an email or voicemail reminder a day or two before their conferences. Many WAees remark at how helpful this is at cutting down missed conferences.

If your professor makes WA conferences mandatory for all students, you will want to make sure he or she informs the class about this (and expects you to enforce it).

If a student does miss a conference, you may contact him to reschedule the conference, you may hold on to his paper and wait to hear from him or you may opt to just return the paper through campus mail without having a conference. The choice is yours; just be sure to be clear and consistent.

Late papers

Late papers can create a big hassle. The most important thing you can do with respect to late papers is to establish boundaries ahead of time. Consider taking the following steps:

- See if your professor will agree to have all late papers handed in to her. This discourages students from being excessively late and allows the professor to make the tough calls about what constitutes “too late” for your comments or a conference. You can explain to the professor that such an arrangement deters abuse of the WAs.
- Set a firm date past which you will not accept late papers. Have your professor state these terms and back them, implicitly, with his own authority, rather than with yours.
- Make a policy of allowing yourself a certain, fixed amount of time between receiving a paper and having the conference. For example, some WAs will not schedule a conference less than 48 hours after receiving the paper or within 48 hours of the final due date.

Sub-standard drafts

Sometimes a student will submit a draft that, in your mind, doesn't qualify as a draft. Instead, it seems like a rushed attempt to complete a draft before the student meets with you for a conference. This becomes frustrating for the WA, because he is left wondering whether this is a student's best effort or just a thrown-together paper. There are some proactive steps you can take to try to avoid or make the best of this situation.

- Ask the professor to consider informing the class that she will be “looking over the WA copy” before handing it to the WA.
- See if the professor is open to screening the papers for incomplete or problematic drafts. You could also offer to do this for the professor; just make sure *the professor*, not you, contacts the students with questionable papers.
- Have the professor collect WA copies along with the final draft students hand in for a grade. Even if the professor doesn't intend to read the first drafts, this can be a powerful incentive for students to take the first draft—and the revision process—more seriously.
- After receiving a batch of papers, consider sending a quick email asking each of your WAees to tell you in a few words what stage of the writing process they are at, and what type of help might be most useful.
- If it is determined that the student has given you an incomplete draft, don't consider the conference to be a waste of time. Look at the draft as pre-writing and talk with the student about what would be the next step in rewriting the paper. This tactic may gauge

whether the paper lacks effort, was rushed because of time constraints and/or the student needs help but is disguising this need with an incomplete draft.

FAQs about Course WAing

How much time should I allot for each conference?

It's up to you, but most conferences are scheduled for 30 minutes.

Can WA conferences be held in my dorm room or my WAee's dorm room?

No. Regardless of where you and your WAee feel most comfortable, WA conferences should take place in a public area. Other than that, it is up to you and your WAee to determine how noisy or crowded the environment of a WA conference should be.

Should I offer to look at a WAee's paper a second time?

This decision is up to you, and most WAs are willing to do this. Still, you should probably take steps to avoid over-indulging, zealous or demanding WAees. For example, the second run-through might not be as thorough, or it might not involve a conference. You can offer to look over the paper just for one particular writing issue, or to email general comments back to the WAee. Your main responsibility as a Course WA is the initial paper and conference.

Can I schedule a WA conference in the Writing Center during my shift?

Definitely not. It's possible that a WAee may track you down and schedule an appointment during your shift, but we ask that you leave your appointments open for writing center traffic. Make sure the distinction between Course WAing and the Writing Center is clear to your WAees. A WAee may be disappointed if they expect to work with you in the Center, but you've already been scheduled to work with other WAees.

Do I have to make up missed conferences?

It depends on the reason why the conference was missed. If the student was sick or had a family emergency and made an effort to contact you prior to the conference, you should reschedule the conference. However, if a student continually misses conferences you may contact the professor and tell the student you will not reschedule the conference.

You should check with the professor ahead of time to make sure he or she approves and is aware of your policy. If you don't want to make up missed conferences, you should email your WAees the day before their conferences to remind them where and when they agreed to meet you. Additionally, you should return papers with written comments on them via campus mail or through the course professor to WAees who missed their conferences.

What if my WAee wants advice about the content of a paper?

Your initial meeting with the professor should involve some discussion of style versus content, so that you both have the same expectations about this issue. It is impossible to ignore content completely when you WA; issues of clarity, logical coherence, and paragraph transitions all touch upon content as well as style. However, your job as a WA is to rely on your training in the *writing process*, not on your knowledge of the subject matter, to help your WAees. If your WAee asks you if something in his paper is “correct” – the slope of a graph, the interpretation of a text, the events leading up to World War I – you should probably resist the temptation to provide a direct answer. You might simply explain what the role of the WA is and refer the student to the professor or a course TA for clarification of content questions.

Pleading ignorance may not be the best solution in this situation. A student may see your lack of knowledge on economic theory as a reason for why the WA process should not work. It is important for the WA to educate the student on what his role is and is not in the completion of the assignment.

Guidelines for In-Class Introductions

- Introduce yourself
 - Write your name, contact information, and conference location on the board
 - Get a sense of how many of the WAees have worked with a Course WA before
- Paper Process
 - Describe the in-class process:
 - WAees will turn in paper drafts to the professor
 - You can also ask WAees to submit a note to you with the paper, listing two-three concerns they want the conference to address
 - WAees will sign up for a conference in class or on a sheet at the professor's office
 - Assuming you and the professor have established that the WAees will work with the same WA for all papers (strongly encouraged), make sure WAees know this and remember to sign up with the same WA
 - Give them an idea of what the conference will be like
 - Check that all of the WAees know where your conference location is
 - Suggest that WAees bring relevant readings and a pen/pencil to their conference
 - Conferences last about 20-30 minutes and are highly collaborative
 - WAees should come prepared to discuss their writing
 - Share an example of
 - Check if anyone has questions about conferences
- Writing Center
 - If WAees want help on other papers, they should visit the Writing Center for a similar conference experience
 - Scheduling for course WA conferences is separate from the Writing Center. While WAees can bring additional drafts to the Writing Center, they are not guaranteed to meet with their Course WA or permitted to use the center instead of their scheduled course WA conference. It's possible that students may track you down through MySwarthmore, but we should discourage WAees from replacing a Course WA conference with one in the Writing Center.
- WAMs
 - If WAees want a more regular partnership to discuss all of their writing, they can let you know and you can refer them to the WAM Program
- Contact Information

Mention again your name and contact information

The WAee's Guide to Getting the Most Out of a Conference *Do ...*

-do write down the day/time/location of your conference and contact your WA if you need to reschedule--'-'
WAs are busy Swatties with work and commitments, too!

-do come prepared with specific questions and concerns about your paper-as much as possible, the conference should be about where YOU see your paper going

-do be honest about where you are in the writing process-if your WA knows your paper was thrown together at the last minute, for example, she can shift the focus to pre-writing or outlining so that you get as much as possible out of the conference

-do ask for clarification if you don't understand one of your WA's suggestions or the reasoning behind it

-do feel free to write down yourself any thoughts you have during the conference or suggestions that you find particularly helpful

-do remember that your WA is not an authority on the content of the paper-he can offer suggestions to make your argument clearer and more well-rounded but will rarely be familiar with specific course material

-do feel free to follow up with your WA by e-mail if you have questions that arise after the conference-she may not always have time to meet again or offer extensive suggestions but will likely be happy to answer a question or two

Don't ...

-don't assume that the WA will do all the work for you-the conference should be a two-way conversation between you and the WA, and the more ideas and feedback you bring to the conference the more you will get out of it

-don't be afraid to question your WA's suggestions (in a respectful way) if you disagree--'-'-sometimes comments simply may not be in line with where you see your paper going

-don't expect your WA to be able to determine your grade--'-'-though WAs may be in touch with the professor about specific guidelines for the assignment, they cannot foresee how the professor will assess any given paper

-don't expect to leave with a formula for a perfect paper

-don't go to a WA if you're only interested in having your paper proofread for minor errors. The WA program is about the whole writing process and improving you as a writer, not just your paper

