How to write an Observation Paper

Use this PowerPoint to help you with your Observation for your second paper for Comp. I
Analyze the Assignment

- Look at the assignment sheet.
  - Note the **value** of the assignment
  - Look at **purpose**, **audience** and **length**.
  - Note that you have **three weeks** to complete the paper. *(See course calendar for due dates.)*
  - **NOTES ARE REQUIRED FROM THE OBSERVATION.**

- Have you conducted your Observation?
  - Is it an observation of **one person**?
  - Is the person in the **profession** you wish to enter?
  - **How much time** have you allotted for the observation?
  - Do you have a **backup plan** in case this observation falls through?
Week Five (Have you lined up your observation?? Ask me for help!)
**M—2/9—FINAL DRAFT OF YOUR REFLECTION ESSAY DUE!! & Start discussing Observation Essay.
W—2/11—Continue Discussing Observation Essay Assignment. (PowerPoint in class.)

Week Six (Have you conducted your observation?? Ask me if you still need help!!)
M—2/16—Continue Discussing Observation Essay Assignment. (PowerPoint in class.)
W—2/18—Finish PowerPoint on How to Write an Observation.

Week Seven (Write your Observation Essay draft this week. Let the Writing Center Staff help you!)

Week Eight (Start thinking about additional sources to use for your I-search paper.)
M—3/2—FINAL DRAFT OF OBSERVATION ESSAY DUE TODAY!!!! & Start discussing the I-Search Paper.
W—3/4—Discuss pp. 211-221 from “How to Write an I-Search Paper” from my web site. (Take notes while reading.)

Week Nine (Look for sources to write your I-search paper. Use the librarian’s advice.)
M—3/9—Librarian will visit our classroom today to teach you how to find sources.
W—3/11—Librarian will visit our classroom today to teach you how to find sources.

Week Ten (Keep looking for sources!!! Go to the Library and the Writing Center for help!)
**M—3/16—Discuss Sample I-Search Essay from “How to Write an I-search Paper” (pp. 222-227) (Take notes while reading.)
W—3/18—Discuss sample I-search paper on my web site. Be sure to take notes while reading. (See link below.) (http://faculty.nwacc.edu/tmcginn/Spring%202012/Mv%20Path%20to%20Becoming%20a%20Registered%20Nurse.pdf)
IF you forget to line up someone to observe OR it is too tricky to line up someone…

- Observe one person doing something, somewhere.
- Learn from that activity.
- Make multiple short visits.
- Take notes on what he or she does.
- Follow the same process outlined on the assignment sheet and in this PowerPoint.
- Turn in your process on the due date.
- Remember that this will NOT count as a source for the I-search paper.
I am a firm believer in the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. (See the link below to learn more.)
(http://www.aip.org/history/heisenberg/p08.htm)

- You cannot watch something without affecting the outcome; however, you can watch without participating, which is the real goal of this assignment.

Try **NOT** to participate in any way and **ONLY** watch. **TAKE NOTES** instead. That should be your only activity. It is OK to ask questions for clarification.

*Record as much as you can: whatever you see, hear, smell, taste and feel. (Just like last time.)*
Watching is just looking. Passive.

Seeing is taking in information and writing it down, learning from what you are viewing. It is very active and enriches your whole essay.
Hearing vs. Listening

- Hearing is simply having your ears open. **Passive.**
- Listening is paying attention to and recording what you hear, learning from it. **Active.**
- It is OK to overhear and write down dialogue between the person observed and others around you, but **AVOID** asking the person being observed **tons of questions** or you have now conducted an **Interview** instead of an **Observation.**
- **Make sure you check with whomever you have observed to be sure it is OK to have overheard conversations in your essay.**
Describe the smell of the place where you are observing. Capture the feeling. If it is a gym, does it smell sweaty? If it is a kitchen, does it smell like curry? If it is a library, does it smell like old or new books? Both?
Tasting

- Probably the **least** required part of observation, depending on the person or activity being observed. (Culinary Arts students probably **NEED** to tell us about the tastes involved in their observation.)
This sense is best portrayed by **how you feel** about the place or person being observed: warm and inviting? cold and sterile?

You don’t need to touch the person being observed. How does the **place** where he or she works feel?
Once you have all your notes from one observation or several observations of the SAME person, what do you do?

- Review those notes. Add anything else that comes back to you as you re-read.
- Flesh out any details of the place where he or she worked. Give the person a complete context.
- Describe both the inner place and the outside place, the building or the town where the observation took place.
Review your notes and look for patterns. It may be good to put all the description of the person in the same paragraph or two, all the description of the activity he or she performed in another paragraph or two and the place where he or she works in yet another paragraph or two.

Look for the organization strategy that makes the most sense to you.

- Chronological? Analogical? Other?
 Drafting

- Content should always be the focus of your first draft:
  - Did you meet the assignment requirements?
  - Is the paper long enough? (2–3 pages min.)
  - Is there a significant point to the essay? (thesis)
  - Is there a clear organization to the paper? (Remember this is for the reader, not you.)
  - Do you have rich, vivid sensory imagery?
    - Did you describe the **person**, the **activity** and the **place** of the activity?
Peer-Critiquing

- Strive for two different critiques: one should come from a group member and one should come from outside the group.
- Compare and contrast those critiques so you can learn from their feedback what to do to make your paper better.
- Disregard incomplete or unsupported comments.
- Pay attention to clear, helpful feedback.
- Modify your draft with your audience in mind.
  - (We will use almost exactly the same questions as we did with the Reflection Essay.)
For each point raised in the critiquer’s comments, you should respond to that feedback either agreeing with or disagreeing with the suggestions and stating what you will do.

These responses count as part of your overall grade so take your time and consider the feedback so that you make thoughtful comments.

(See sample of critique and response on the next slide.)
Sample Peer Critique

Peer critique for Joe by Tom

1. The first paragraph didn’t grab my attention very much. I like how you described the place where the event happened, but I just don’t understand why I should be interested in the topic. I think if you used part of your conclusion or another paragraph where it was really vivid, it would help grab my attention.

2. I can’t see a clear thesis in the beginning of your paper. Perhaps you are still working on it? Again the conclusion seems to make the strongest statement and maybe that is OK for a reflective paper. You could always ask someone in the Writing Center.

3. AND SO ON AND SO ON!

4. 

5. 

6. 

7.

Sample Response to a Critique

Response to Tom’s Critique

1. Thanks for your feedback, Tom. I think I will move some of my conclusion to the front of my paper and not save the best for last. If I didn’t grab your attention, then I might not grab Mr. McGinn’s attention and that might hurt my paper grade.

2. Thanks again Tom, but I have to disagree here. I think my thesis is in the right place, right up front, but I will ask Mr. McGinn or someone in the Writing Center if it is OK to put the thesis in the conclusion.

3. RESPOND TO EACH PART OF EACH PIECE OF FEEDBACK. REMEMBER THAT THESE ARE GRADED, TOO!

4. AND SO ON AND SO ON!

5. 

6. 

7.
Revising

- Review your critiques to see where they agree and disagree on what to do with your draft.
- If the critiquers have confused you, see me or go to the Writing Center for help.
- Don’t be afraid to re-work, re-see the whole paper.
- Revising isn’t just tinkering with an existing draft. The whole paper might have to change.
Look at paragraph length.
Look at sentence length.
Look at word use.
Look at style.
Look at tone.
Proofreading

- Read aloud.
- Read sloopooooooooooooooooooowly.
- READ BACKWARDS, SENTENCE X SENTENCE.
- Check the following four areas: GUMP
  - GRAMMAR
  - USAGE
  - MECHANICS
  - PUNCUTATION
    - (See my web site for a PowerPoint on Proofreading)
MLA Format

- MLA stands for Modern Language Association.
- MLA format is both for appearance of your paper and for how to cite and document sources.
- See the sample essays on my web site for the proper MLA format.
- MLA paper format means:
  - one-inch margins,
  - a four-part heading in the upper LEFT of the first page,
  - your name and page number in the upper RIGHT of each page,
  - doubled-spaced text all through the essay, and
  - a standard font size, usually ten or twelve point.
Turning in Your Paper

- TOP—the Final Draft of your essay in MLA Format (see next slide)
- Next—the Revised/Edited/Proofread Draft(s).
- Next—the Responses to the Peer Critiques.
- Next—The Peer Critiques.
- Next—The Rough Drafts, numbered if more than one.
- BOTTOM—The Pre-writing from activities in class and any done outside out of class.
- (Keep any homework notes or Journal entries not relevant to the paper.)