Writing Advice

Effective Writing Center

UMUC

Dear Student,

Congratulations on your progress in writing this assignment for EDCP100. You are smart to come up with an outline before you begin writing your rough draft. I think you'll find that it's much easier to write your paper when you have a detailed outline
in front of you. Good work so far!

My name is Anna, and it's my pleasure to work with you today. I have been an advisor with the EWC for over a year now, and I've also worked with students
in the classroom for the past four years. I really enjoy being able to help students fine-tune their writing skills and become more confident writers. Plus, I always learn something new in the process of working with writers like you! ☺

You are welcome to come to the Effective Writing Center for help at any stage in the writing process, whether you are having trouble understanding an assignment or want feedback on a rough draft. At the EWC we are attentive readers who help you improve as a writer by explaining and modeling effective writing skills. For a more detailed discussion of our services, please consult the EWC Web site.

Advice Overview

Resources to help you revise your writing assignment are hyperlinked within this letter and in the Resources section at the end. Before reading this advice, please review the writing that you submitted and have a copy handy. I will often use examples from your paper to illustrate my advice. Your writing will appear in orange, while my suggestions will be in green. My goal today is to help you improve your outline, and get you started on researching your occupation.

Assignment Requirements

It looks like your outline is for a paper about your career goals. Personally, I like the way your outline includes a lot of detail. This shows that you put a lot of thought into planning your paper.

Next time you submit a paper to the Writing Center, make sure you cut-and-paste your assignment guidelines into the *Description* box. This will help your advisor give you more detailed feedback. In the meantime, make sure you familiarize yourself with the ins and outs of your assignment. Try creating a checklist that breaks down the assignment into a series of requirements. This way you can double-check that you've followed all of your instructor's directions. Here is a website that can help you make sense of your assignment guidelines: Understanding your assignment.

Thesis & Organization

Outline
As I said above, a detailed outline like yours makes it much easier to research and write your rough draft. Now, I think you can improve your outline by making a couple of minor revisions:

o First of all, remember that each heading in your outline should represent one paragraph in your paper. Think realistically about how much information you can include in a single paragraph. For example, your "Background" paragraph looks like it will be very long. Consider how you can divide this paragraph up into several shorter paragraphs, like this:
   o Job opportunities available
   o Daily job requirements
   o What is expected of people in the field
   o Education requirements
Of course, this is just a suggestion and you should come up with your own paragraph headings.

o Secondly, an outline can help you satisfy your assignment requirements. Double-check that your outline addresses all of your instructor's questions in your outline. (This is where a checklist of your assignment guidelines will come in handy!)

Before you begin revising your outline, I recommend looking over this handout: OWL: Outline. It gives a good description of outlines, as well as several helpful examples.

Thesis statement
I recommend adding a thesis statement to your outline. As you may know, the goal of a thesis is to summarize the central argument of your essay in one or two sentences. It also appears at the end of your introduction. In order to come up with a thesis statement for this

paper, ask yourself what message you are trying to convey to your readers. (For instance, is it that computer systems managers are highly sought-after because of the special training they require? Or, perhaps it is that computer systems management is the right career choice for you because of your talents and education?) Then, summarize this message in one or two sentences. For a detailed explanation of how to develop your own thesis statement, visit: LEO: Thesis statement. Another excellent resource is this UNC Thesis handout, which includes several examples of effective thesis statements.

Topic sentences

You asked for feedback on your topic sentences. Now, I'm not sure which sentences in your outline are meant to be your topic sentences. Remember that a topic sentence is the first line of a paragraph, and its goal is to summarize the paragraph's main idea. In an outline, I would expect to see topic sentences after each paragraph heading. Try coming up with complete sentences that summarize each paragraph's main idea. Then, add them to your paper like this:

   o Education requirements: *Computer systems managers are required to obtain an advanced degree, in addition to completing specialized training.*

Of course I've made this sentence up, but it gives you an idea of how to write your own topic sentences. Here are two excellent resources that will give you additional information on writing effective topic sentences: Paragraph development and Paragraph.

Development & Research

Conducting research

After you've submitted your outline, you should begin researching your chosen occupation. I highly recommend visiting the Bureau of Labor Statistic's Occupational Outlook Handbook. This website provides up-to-date statistics and information (such as job availability, education requirements, and average salary) on many different occupations. I think this resource would be very helpful to you on this assignment!

Another excellent source is UMUC's virtual library. This website offers a number of databases with full-text journal articles that you might find useful. Before visiting the library website, I recommend that you take this library tutorial. It does an excellent job of explaining how to conduct searches on your topic and locate a variety of online resources.

Also, the library offers a few great online services that make it really easy to contact a librarian. For instance, you can email a librarian with a specific question or even chat with a librarian through Instant Messenger. If you aren't sure how to begin researching your occupation, then you should definitely get in touch with a librarian. Here's how you can do it: Ask a librarian.

Grammar & Mechanics

Proofread

Don't forget to proofread your outline before you hand it in because it contains several errors. Try reading it aloud, or asking a friend to look over it for you. Here is a spelling error that proofreading would help you catch:

- To be able to test networks for ~~vulnerabilites~~ vulnerabilities and holes in the security.

You can learn about a few additional proofreading strategies on this website: [Proofreading your writing](#).

Summary

Here is a quick checklist that sums up the revisions we've covered today:

- ☐ Create a checklist of your assignment guidelines.
- ☐ Make sure each heading on your outline represents one paragraph in your paper.
- ☐ Double-check that your outline addresses all of your assignment requirements.
- ☐ Add a thesis statement to your outline.
- ☐ Come up with a topic sentence for each paragraph.
- ☐ Research your occupation before writing your rough draft.
- ☐ Proofread your outline for errors.

I really enjoyed working with you today. Good luck on your assignment! ☺

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More Resources

[The Effective Writing Center](#)

[Purdue University Online Writing Center](#)