

“SO WHAT?”

Establishing significance – because significant, pertinent writing is good writing

BEFORE YOU START WRITING:

- Understand the assignment
- Understand who your audience is – who will be reading what you write? What perspective do they have? What do they know/ not know?
- Examine your body of evidence to come up with the main idea (your thesis)
- Outline what you will be talking about. For outline structure, see essay structure handout

WHILE WRITING:

- Refer back to your outline to...
 - stay focused on the prompt
 - maintain an organized structure that provides clarity
 - use the best evidence in your arsenal
- Remember who your audience is
- Use the conclusion to clearly state significance

AFTER YOU FINISH YOUR FIRST DRAFT:

- Let it sit for a little while and then look it over again with a fresh perspective
- Make sure you have addressed the right topic in the most effective and meaningful way
- Re-examine your assumption that the reader will be able to figure out the significance; if you don't see an answer to “so what?”, come up with one that is clear and coherent
- Put yourself in the reader's shoes; try to anticipate questions that they may have as they are reading your paper. Answer those questions in a way that contributes to your topic.
- Ask yourself...
 - How does your writing influence the reader? In other words, why should they bother reading it?
 - Did you answer the “so what?” in an effective and meaningful way?
 - Is your writing interesting?
- A second opinion is always useful

SIGNIFICANCE IS IN THE JUXTAPOSITION

Jux•ta•po•si•tion: instance of placing two or more things side by side

Use juxtaposition to produce a contrast. Dark is only dark in contrast with light. Darkness makes light meaningful, and vice versa. You can establish significance by contrasting different situations, people, ideas, etc.

For example:

The juxtaposition – Children of the Mofu tribe of northern Cameroon, Africa study diligently in classrooms with mud floors and hardly any educational resources. Most schools in developed/ westernized countries provide students with well- equipped classrooms, air-conditioning and advanced technology; many students in those countries tend to slack off during class and on their homework.

What significance do you think arises from the juxtaposition of these two situations?

“Juxtaposition.” Merriam-Webster Online. Web. 19 Sept. 2010. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/juxtaposition>>. Inspired in part by advice from Evan Luzar, English Department, Beachwood High School in Beachwood, Ohio.