

Preface

Setting clear and productive goals can be difficult. Sometimes, clients do not identify the goals that are most pressing. Thus, it is the tutor's job to help clients understand how prioritizing goals can help improve their writing processes. This module will help you better understand how to set clear goals and provide clients with the guidance they need to become more independent and confident writers.

The following chart illustrates the way that goals provide structure for tutoring sessions.

Beginning of the Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromise with client to set clear, specific, and reasonable goals for the session • Record the goals on a scrap piece of paper
Throughout the Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always connect strategies back to session goals (e.g., "We are working on explaining your evidence in order to make your argument flow better.") • Address the relationship between goals (e.g., "Drafting a working thesis statement will help you generate more focused topic sentences.") • Manage your time carefully and keep the client aware of the relationship between time and your session goals (e.g., "We only have ten minutes left, so we can continue to look for relevant evidence for your fifth body paragraph, or we can discuss APA in-text citation.")
At the End of the Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you and the client have addressed the session goals (e.g., "We revised your thesis statement, reordered your paragraphs to improve the logic of your argument, and talked about increasing sentence-level clarity by using descriptive verbs.") • Review the goals that you did not meet and explain why the goals were not met (e.g., "We were not able to generate an outline, since you have not yet read all of your source material.") • Discuss the client's next steps. (e.g., "After you draft your conclusion, I recommend that you edit the paragraph for unclear pronouns and run-on sentences. You can use the same editing processes we discussed while editing your introduction.")

Getting Started

Most sessions will begin with you and the client reviewing and assessing an assignment sheet. Often, clients do not know strategies to use that could help them interpret a writing assignment. Use the following strategies to *teach* clients how to assess assignment sheets and productively begin.

Strategies for Helping the Client Assess the Assignment Sheet:

- 1) Underlining key words/phrases; take time to ensure the client understands these words/phrases (can he/she explain them in his/her own words?)
- 2) Note subjects that you need to define or on which you need to provide background information (is he/she familiar with these subjects and definitions? Can he/she explain these in his/her own words?)
- 3) List questions (and implied questions) in his/her own words
- 4) Discuss possible evidence that the client can use

Setting Clear and Productive Goals:

Identifying the “Problems behind the Problems”

Effective tutors learn to identify the “problems behind the problems”—the underlying misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge that prevent clients from achieving their writing goals—in clients' papers. Choosing simple revision goals (revise thesis statement, draft topic sentences, etc.) might help improve students' papers, but the goals will not help the client learn to fix their writing problems on their own.

Check out the following essay and see how the tutor identifies (in **bold**) the following problems, “problems behind the problems,” and sets clear and attainable session goals. In this scenario, the client brings the draft below and asks to work on clarity. The tutor's thoughts are bolded and integrated into the text.

Sample Assignment

Choose **one** of the ten posted essays that you feel provides an answer to *What Makes us Human?* in a way that connects with your personal experience and outlook on life. Write a short essay (approx. 500 words, or one single spaced page) in which you state why your chosen essay makes a personal connection for you (this statement is your thesis), and then explain and support your thesis with specific details, explanations or arguments. Finish with a conclusion in which you wrap up your essay and go on to suggest briefly how you foresee developing your own understanding of what it means to be human in future (either in this course or beyond). I am looking for logical organization, clear explanations, and correct use of language in your essay. This essay will serve as your first graded assignment of the semester. You will be asked to revise it in response to my comments and suggestions during the first week of class.

Sample Essay

What makes us human is a complex question that can be answered in a myriad of ways. We can argue that our DNA is the key to our human existence; however how and which sequences or genes provide us with our human nature? After all we share 99% of our DNA with chimpanzees so why are we so vastly different from them? **This information should be cited. Is this information necessary?** I believe that ultimately it is societal pressure and the history of that has provided us with moral standards of generosity, cooperation, and altruism; which is the key to what makes us human; a similar idea is argued in the article “Groups and Gossip Drove the Evolution of Human Nature” by Eric Michael Johnson. **What is the relationship between Johnson's arguments and your arguments? How is the client's argument similar to Johnson's?** Throughout history homosapians have been proven to be social animals they hunted together, they fought together, and therefore survived together. **Frequent use of “it” and “its.”** It is cooperation that lead to their survival and therefore promoted ideas of altruism and generosity amongst its members. It is these ideas that became our moral basis and it is these ideas which I believe have created our humanity. **Can this argument be expressed differently to more clearly show the relationship between ideas? How does this argument relate to Johnson's? Does this statement address how the article makes a personal connection to you?**

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I believe that morality and generosity are the key characteristics of what being human means. It is through these ideas that we have thrived and created such a complex society. **Is this the paper's thesis statement? What is the relationship between this idea and societal pressure and the history of society? What is the relationship between this idea and Johnson's article?** It is this quality that separates us from every other species. We see some species work in groups and packs for survival however never as complex and structured as our own. Morality and the rules society has in place are our humanity; they are the key to our identity. **Is this the paragraph's argument? How does this claim relate to Johnson?** For example if we kill we go to jail and are shunned from society in another species if one member kills they typically don't face any punishment. **Where does this evidence come from? Should the evidence refer to Johnson?** We are not savages and it is societal rules that have ultimately safeguarded us from becoming them. Whether it is through fear of a tarnished reputation that we abide by the rules set in place as is argued in the aforementioned article; or whether it is instinct to abide by them it is clear that our humanity lies in our moral standards and our acceptance of thereof.

Generosity is the other aspect of our morality that is a key feature to our humanity as well. **What is the relationship between generosity and morality?** In the theory of evolution survival of the fittest is the main concept which guides the theory. In other words if a member of a certain species is more apt at finding food it will survive longer, as well as increase it chances of finding a mate which will then allow that aptitude of finding food to continue through that members offspring. So why exactly would any member of any species want to be generous? After all if the weaker member of a species dies it allows for the more apt members to survive and take advantage of the greater resources. Nevertheless we are one of the most generous species that there are we give food and shelter to those who don't have it, we are driven to do it whether it is an innate drive or a societal one we humans have a such a great capacity for generosity that is what makes the word human mean more that just the name of another species. **Where is the evidence in this paragraph? Does Johnson provide pertinent evidence?**

Conclusively I believe it is our generosity and innate morality that have lead to our humanity and therefore classifying individuals who present these traits as "human". I agree with the premise that societal pressure plays and played a role in allowing these traits to exist in our species **Where is this premise presented in your paper?** nevertheless I also believe that there are a number of many different possibilities as to why these characteristics are present in humans. As I learn more of what it means to be human I hope to learn more about the biological aspect to our humanity, as well as to how it is these aspects that provide our societal structure.

Problem 1: Argument unclear (thesis statement, paragraph arguments, relationships between ideas)

Potential problem-behind-the-problem:

- Client might not understand the concept of argument (a conclusion based on premises)
- Client doesn't understand purpose of assignment (probably to get students either to respond to or explain Johnson's argument)

Problem 2: Evidence unclear (lack of evidence and citation, no analysis of textual evidence)

Potential "Problems behind the Problems"

- Client might not understand how to respond to a scholar's argument
- Client might not understand how to integrate their own examples with scholarly evidence to craft an argument
- Client might not have carefully read or understood Johnson's article

Possible Session Goals

1. Revise thesis statement to clearly address assignment
2. Introduce, cite, and explain 1-2 pieces of evidence

These goals will demand sub-steps like: analyzing the assignment, reviewing/re-reading the text, and revising at least several sentences, possibly several paragraphs.

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Ways to address the underlying problems:

1. Developing thesis statements
2. Planning evidence by listing cited quotes and paraphrases before drafting

These concepts could be explained during the session, studied in a follow-up session, or exemplified in a handout from the front table; clients who are exposed to the concept or skill once with a tutor, then try the skill independently, and then check their work with a tutor, often progress the most.

Teaching Independence

If your goals are clear and specific, your session will be effective. Clear goals help clients hone in on the issues in their writing. Clear goals can also help clients become independent drafters, revisers, and editors.

Use the following chart to better understand the difference between unclear and clear goals.

Unclear Goal	Clear Goal
Cut down on wordiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Eliminate wordy verb constructions✓ Eliminate unneeded adverbs and adjectives✓ Combine sentences containing repetitive or related information✓
Edit the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Choose accurate, effective words✓ Assess preposition choice✓ Assess sentence construction and variation
Use evidence more effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Frame evidence by introducing and explaining quotations, paraphrases, and summaries✓ Learn how to paraphrase without plagiarizing✓ Learn how to select appropriate quotations
Improve the paper's flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Re-order paragraphs to increase argument's logical flow✓ Revise topic sentences and transition sentences to emphasize relationship between paragraphs✓ Work on paragraph structure, including argumentative topic sentences, clear evidence to support the sentences, and analysis
Understand comma rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use commas after introductory clauses and phrases✓ Use commas with coordinating conjunctions to join independent clauses✓ Use commas in between dependent and independent clauses

Module Comprehension Check:

1. How does goal-setting depend on an assignment's direct and implied questions?

Example of direct questions: Consider the author's argument. Is it convincing? Why or why not?

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Example of related indirect questions: What does the author argue? What are the components of a convincing argument? How did the author argue his or her claim(s)?

2. How does goal-setting depend on the “problems-behind-the-problems”?
3. Why must the tutor and client collaborate on session goals? Explain.
4. Consider the following scenario: The assignment sheet requires use of one course reading and one additional source; however, the client has not incorporated evidence into a two-page draft. List two possible problems behind the missing evidence and two possible session goals.