Advice for New Writing Assistants
1. Make sure you take with the professor about his/her expectations from the beginning.
2. Communicate with the professor: talk about the possibility of your sending weekly emails to
   the students to remind them about your availability or office hours, request occasional
   meetings where the two of you talk about specific assignments and students, and attend class
   (all or part of it) to introduce yourself and talk about your role as the class Writing Assistant.
3. Assist students in making sense of and meeting the professor’s expectations for writing
   assignments.
4. Provide a space for students to discuss thematic ideas they have for their assignments;
   provide a space for students to discuss sentence-level writing questions and issues.
5. Work with the professor to identify and address student-specific concerns.
6. Inform the professor that Gene and Kathy are resources for students with particularly
   significant needs.
7. Make sure the professor knows about the availability of one-to-one, long-term ESL tutoring
   for students who might benefit from it.
8. In a sense, the assignment can be seen as an impediment in the writer’s path toward
   improving his/her writing. One of the jobs of the WA is to help the student-writer navigate
   and understand what the assignment is asking him or her to do.
9. Try to set up with the professor a schedule of meetings between the two of you, just so you
   can touch base and make sure that you are focusing on areas that the professor wants you to,
   or that you are not focusing on areas the professor isn’t very concerned about.
10. As a WA, you provide a “listening ear” for students to bounce ideas off of for both sentence-
    level and content-based issues.
11. Help the student understand the professor’s needs and expectations.
12. Do not get in the professor’s way of giving directions to students.
13. If you’re uncertain about an assignment, don’t guess! Ask the professor for clarification, or
    coach the student on how to approach the professor for clarification.
14. While you are required to be flexible, do not feel obligated to alter your own schedule at the
    last minute for a student.
15. Always maintain confidentiality of student work.

Wish List for Faculty
1. Communicate your expectations of student writing to the WA. Share your writing
   assignments and explain your grading criteria to the WA.
2. The WA is supposed to help students help themselves. The WA can help students with
   organization, flow, strengthening a thesis, etc.
3. WAs are not grammar editors, though WAs can work with students on identifying and
   addressing patterns of error in students’ writing.
4. WAs are not meant to be editors of student papers, nor are WAs supposed to “clean up”
   drafts. WAs generally feel most productive when they work with students on their papers
   one-to-one.

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5. WAs like to work with the writers themselves rather than just the drafts in isolation.
6. Be sensitive to your WA’s academic schedule. If s/he has two exams in one week, s/he cannot meet with students for long periods of time.
7. Set out your expectations at the beginning of the course. This gives the WA a better idea of how s/he must structure his/her schedule.
8. Explain to the WA the major goals of the course at the beginning of the term.
9. WAs provide feedback on students’ papers regarding organization, clarity, and thesis. WAs listen and comment in non-directive ways to students’ ideas during the writing process to help students clarify their thoughts.
10. Professors should remember that the WA isn’t usually in class and thus has trouble interpreting assignments if the WA and prof. haven’t gone over expectations beforehand.
11. Professors should remember that we have only about half an hour with each student; not all sentence-level issues will be addressed.
12. Touch base with the WA frequently so s/he is focusing on what you want students to learn about writing in your class.
13. WAs aim to make students better writers; WAs don’t just make better papers.
14. The WA doesn’t take ownership of papers and doesn’t simply edit them.
15. The WA’s main objective is to help students.
16. The WA is often the first to know when students are confused by an assignment. Invite feedback from the WA about the problems students are running into.