

English 101-033 Final Portfolio Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide for revising, formatting, and preparing your final portfolio. The last page at the end of the checklist explains the format of your final portfolio. This is not the time to ignore directions—this final portfolio is what you’ve been working for all semester.

Content

- Make sure that you have a purposeful thesis statement. What is your main point and YOUR PURPOSE in writing the essay? Will readers know what they should have gained from your papers, or will they feel like they simply read some interesting interpretive points?
- One recurring problem in terms of content is that many people uncover excellent strategies that Kalman/Neufeld/Junod use, but they do not explain how these strategies help accomplish the purpose given the author’s audience (and/or context). For example, “Junod uses description as a strategy” does not really say anything (even if you use textual examples). You must show how this (or any) strategy helps achieve a set purpose.
- Another issue is the unexplained use of quotations. A quotation does not say anything by itself; you must explain what that quotation means and show how it supports your case.
- Make sure your essay interprets the writer’s argument and not the writer’s topic. For example, does your essay just discuss nutrition and organic food, or are you engaging Kalman’s text rhetorically? Are you just talking about the hurricane survivors, or are you interpreting how the comic is written and drawn? Remember, you are analyzing the text and the way it is composed. Don’t just summarize or re-hash the plot. Don’t take sides in a debate. Argue for your interpretation in your own words, using evidence from the text to support your claims.
- If you pose questions, do you answer them? Or will readers know why the questions are there?
- Give your three portfolio essays a title other than “Interpretive Essay on Kalman” or “Reflection”! Be creative!

Organization

- Ask, “how do each of my paragraphs work together to develop my thesis statement?” Your answer to this question should not be a general, vague response; instead, you should be able to easily point out (in your text) how the various paragraphs of your paper cohere.
- Make sure that you have a clear introduction and conclusion, and that they say (at least somewhat) different things.
- Does your introduction take a definite position? See DK page 234
- Does your introduction accurately preview your paper? See DK page 234
- Look at the first sentence of each paragraph. Is it a topic sentence; i.e., does it introduce the paragraph to which it is attached?
- Look at the last sentence of each paragraph. Is it a transition? Does it take you from one paragraph to the next (without saying the same thing the next sentence says)? See DK page 236
- Can an outside reader read your thesis statement, topic sentences, and transitions *only* and have a pretty good idea of what your paper does (generally, that is)?

- Are your paragraphs too long, too short, or just right? A good rule of thumb is that each page should have 2 to 2.5 paragraphs per page. If you have a really long paragraph, chances are that you could break it up into a number of smaller, more focused paragraphs. See DK page 231

Grammar and Style

- Avoid passive voice. Instead of “The colors used are brown...” try “Neufeld uses brown colors...” See DK page 238
- Make sure that you spell the author’s name correctly—you will lose credibility if you spell the name incorrectly.
- Check for apostrophe errors by doing a search in your word processor (Edit Menu > Find) on your computer for all apostrophes in your essays. Ensure that each instance is a possessive form or a contraction, and then eliminate contractions to accommodate expectations of academic writing. Also make sure that plural words do not have apostrophes. For example, “In my interpretive essay’s, I tried to...” is incorrect.
- Beware of homophones. “Threw” is the past tense of “throw” and does not mean the same thing as “through.” Also look for there/their/they’re, it’s/its, then/than, and effect/affect. Use a dictionary if needed.
- When we speak, we often use sentence fragments. These are portions of a sentence that are not complete sentences. For example: “Which is why I didn’t call him back.” This is something we might say when talking, but in writing it is not a complete sentence (or thought). Identify fragments by putting “I know that” before the sentence. If it doesn’t make sense, it’s a fragment. See DK page 466
- If a sentence is really unwieldy and long, breaking it up into shorter/simpler sentences may help you avoid run-ons. See DK page 470
- Proofread to the best of your ability. See DK pages 454-455. Here are more tactics:
 - Read your work backwards (sentence-by-sentence, not word-by-word)—this breaks up the flow of your paper inside your own head and lets you concentrate on each sentence in isolation.
 - Read your paper out loud or ask someone else to do it. If a sentence sounds weird or clumsy, there will often be a grammatical issue (even if you cannot identify what it is).

Concision

- For each sentence, ask yourself if there are any unnecessary words and get rid of them. For example, the sentence “Neufeld is trying to show that the surviving people are not able to cope with the effects and consequences of the disaster, and so he is trying to reveal to readers that this situation was serious” could be revised as “Neufeld reveals a serious situation in which survivors cannot cope with the disaster’s effects.” Simple is sometimes better.
- Ask yourself if you are trying to sound “professorial” or trying to use large words and long sentences without knowing exactly why you are doing this. Go for the Plain Style instead.

MLA Formatting

- Look at the example of how to format your paper on page 331 in the *DK Handbook*. You'll notice:
 - One-inch margins on all sides
 - Double spacing
 - A plain font like Times New Roman or Arial
 - Size 12 font
 - Indented paragraphs
 - A header on the top right with your name and a page number. **Please pay attention:**
 - **Use your 9-digit student ID instead of your name. Your name should be nowhere in your portfolio.**
 - Put the page number in your header by actually going into the header and inserting an auto-page-number. You may need to use the "Help" menu on your word processor, or use Google to find instructions.
 - A header on the left, with your name, an instructor name, a course number, and date. **You need to pay attention here:**
 - **Use your 9-digit student ID instead of your name.**
 - **Delete the line with my name. Do not put my name on your paper or in your portfolio anywhere.**
 - A title, centered on the page, also size 12 font—no bold or underlining
- Many people are still not following MLA guidelines for in-text citations. It's really easy. Whenever you use a quote or paraphrase or example from the text, put the page number in parentheses after the sentence but before the period. See the *DK Handbook* page 344 for an example.
- You **must have a works cited page after each essay in your portfolio**, and it is not optional. Look at the example of a works cited page on pg. 355 in the *DK Handbook*. Format your works cited page like this. You should already have the citations for Kalman, Neufeld, and Junod; I put them in one of my weekly updates. The citation for your reflective essay is explained in the Assignment 5 guidelines online.

Portfolio Formatting

- You should print your three portfolio essays, making sure the pages are clean and single-sided.
- **Staple each essay separately. That means you need to use a real stapler and three staples, one for each essay. Paper clips and corner-folding are not sufficient.**
- Put the essays in a manila folder. It should not be a folder with pockets. It should be a plain manila folder. These are available in the bookstore.
- One the outside of the manila folder, clearly write:
 - Your student ID – NO NAME
 - English 101-033
 - Fall 2011