



**The Weissman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts
The Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Program
122 Porter Hall**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the SAW Program?

As a part of the Weissman Center for Leadership, the SAW program provides the MHC community with resources to help improve oral and written communication and to promote effective reasoning skills. We provide peer Mentors for many classes and work with faculty on improving classroom activities and assignments; we facilitate writing and speaking workshops each semester; and we also offer individual assistance in writing and speaking at the SAW Center in the Williston Library.

Who can use the SAW Center?

The SAW Center is open to any member of the MHC community: students, alumni, staff, and faculty. The purpose of the SAW Center is to help all people become better communicators, regardless of their current skill level. Even if you are already a very good writer or speaker, there are always a number of ways to strengthen your work. SAW Assistants can help you improve as a writer and/or speaker.

What is the "Arguing" component of the SAW Program?

Good academic writing and speaking typically involves clearly stating a thesis and then offering arguments in support of that thesis. The quality of your work is very closely connected to the quality of the arguments that you offer. SAW is a resource for improving the quality of those arguments.

What is the difference between a SAW Mentor and a SAW Assistant?

SAW Mentors are assigned to a specific class for the entire semester. They attend classes and work with the students in conjunction with faculty members to improve students' oral and written communication skills. SAW Assistants work in the SAW Center, where they assist students in a wide variety of courses on a drop-in basis or by appointment.

If the Mentors and Assistants are students just like me, why should I ask for their help?

SAW Mentors and Assistants are selected for their skills in speaking, arguing, and writing. Faculty nominate students they believe would make excellent Mentors/ Assistants, and students can apply directly without being nominated. All applicants go through a rigorous hiring process, and those selected then take a class in which they are trained to assist peers with speaking, writing, and argumentation. We are all teachers and learners in this process.

What if I am embarrassed to show my work to other students?

Mentors and Assistants will not judge you; they want to help you build your confidence and succeed as an eloquent writers and speakers.

Who will know that I met with a SAW Mentor or Assistant?

If you have a SAW Mentor working with your class, the professor will explain the structure of working with the Mentor. The professor may make meetings mandatory, depending on the course and the goals. If you have concerns, be sure to ask the mentor and professor about the process. If you schedule an appointment with a SAW Center Assistant, the content of your meeting will be kept in a confidential database accessed only by SAW staff.

Is the SAW Mentor in my class like a teaching assistant (TA)?

No, your SAW Mentor is not the same as a teaching assistant. A SAW Mentor is trained to assist you with your overall writing and speaking abilities, not to solely discuss subject matter. Mentors are students like you. They are not enrolled in the course for which they are Mentoring, though they may have taken it in the past.

How will the SAW Assistants know about my particular assignment?

The SAW Assistants are trained to help you to improve the clarity with which you express the content of your assignment. So, for example, even though they may not have read the book/text you are writing about, they will be able to offer advice on how to improve your paper, especially in regard to clarity, structure, analysis, and thesis construction. *You should always bring a copy of the assignment to an appointment to help clarify and guide your work with an Assistant.*

Will I get a good grade if I use a SAW Mentor or Assistant?

The role of Mentors and Assistants is to help you improve your speaking, arguing, and writing skills. Mentors and Assistants do not assign grades, so it is important to understand how your professor will evaluate your work before you come to the SAW Center with your draft.

If I take my paper and/or speech to a SAW Mentor or Assistant, will she fix the problems?

The Mentors and Assistants will help you to identify strengths and weaknesses in your paper or speech, and they will help you to find possible solutions to problems. The primary goal of SAW Mentors and Assistants is to make you a better writer or speaker, by helping you understand the process of creating an argument and providing you with skills.

Do I have to take a finished draft to the SAW Center to receive help?

No, you can come to the SAW Center at any stage of your writing process, from brainstorming and outlining to polishing a nearly finished draft. Of course, if you make an appointment on the same day the assignment is due, you may not have adequate time to revise your work before it is due.

Can I take the same work to the SAW Center more than once?

There is no limit to how much you can use the SAW Center, but we usually recommend leaving at least a day in between appointments for the same assignment. To get the most out of your appointments, be clear about what you need and what type of response would be helpful.

Can I work as a Mentor or Assistant in the SAW Program?

In the middle of each semester, the SAW Program seeks nominations from faculty members and applications from students interested in working for SAW. Students who are hired take a semester long two-credit course in peer mentoring (INDPT-212).

When is the SAW Center open?

Hours are Mondays and Tuesdays 10:00 am - 12:00 pm and 4:00 pm - 10:00 pm. Wednesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 pm - 10:00 pm and Sundays from 2:00 pm - 10:00 pm. Our hours and dates of operation are also on our website: www.mtholyoke.edu/go/saw

How do I schedule an appointment at the SAW Center?

Call x2651 to speak with a SAW staff member. If you call after hours, leave a message; we will return your call as soon as possible to schedule an appointment.

Do I have to make an appointment to get help at the SAW Center?

No, you can come to the SAW Center without making an appointment. We will do our best to accommodate you.

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/go/saw>

For an appointment, call x2651