Content Versus Writing Questions

The purpose of this handout is to help to identify the difference between content and writing issues. You are responsible for both the content of your paper and the quality of the writing. <u>Content goals</u> are to understand the methods or findings of a paper, identify and understand the relevant literature, and determine the key messages. <u>Writing goals</u> are to organize the content, convey key messages in a coherent story, and use well-built paragraphs and sentences and well-chosen words. <u>Content questions</u> are best directed to course leaders, while <u>writing questions</u> may be best directed to Writing Center tutors. Tutors can also help you determine where to direct your questions.

What Questions Can Tutors at the Psychology Writing Center Answer?

The Psychology Writing Center helps students to use writing to reflect their thinking in the field of psychology. Writing tutors do not do these things: select articles, determine the main points of your paper, provide your thesis statement, develop your hypotheses, or interpret your statistical output. <u>You</u> should generate these ideas. Writing Center tutors do play a supporting role in helping you to refine <u>your</u> ideas. We also do not proofread papers for spelling and grammar issues unless the paper is a final version and needs no other writing help (this is rare).

Types of questions that should be answered by…		
You	**Professors/TAs** **(Content questions)**	**Writing Tutors** **(Writing questions)**
✓ What is the thesis of my paper?	o Are my IVs and DVs appropriate?	▪ Is my thesis/argument clearly stated and supported?
✓ What is the main point of the article?	o How do I make a graph?	▪ How should I report results in APA style?
✓ Do I predict that *x* and *y* will be positively or negatively correlated?	o Is my introduction long enough?	▪ Do any ideas in my paper require more explanation?
✓ What are the arguments in support of / against this position?	o What is a main effect/interaction?	▪ How can I improve the clarity of my writing? ***Tip:*** *Have a friend read your paper aloud to you!*
✓ What are the IVs/DVs in this study?	o Am I interpreting the statistical results correctly?	▪ Is the organization of my paper effective?
✓ How should I say [X]? ***Tip:*** *Take a stab and a tutor will provide feedback!*	o How many sources should I cite?	▪ Should I write this section in present or past tense?
✓ Can you check for spelling errors and typos? ***Tip:*** *Ask a friend to proofread!*	o Will I lose points if I don't do [X]?	▪ Is my writing style 'scientific' enough?