English 100 Best Practices Survey Responses

1) To teach students to write a thesis statement/main idea in their introduction...

Most common:

- Provide models/samples – looking at good/bad examples and demonstrating placement of thesis statements.
- Give outlines/templates
- Practice writing in groups – for example: class brainstorm on a “missing” thesis statement.

Unique solutions:

- Storytelling to make an impression about the importance of a thesis
- “Shameless use of analogies” – burgers, umbrellas, courtroom opening statements
- Jigsaw activities
- Have students test their thesis statements by re-writing them as questions. If three focused reasons answer the question, students will know that their thesis statement can yield substantial research.
- Look at their conclusion and mirror it – students often state their thesis statements more clearly in their conclusion than their introductions.

2) To have students support their main ideas with specific details...

Most common:

- Make an outline/template/chart/graphic organizer
- Read models and discuss strong/weak points

Unique solutions:

- Making a puzzle-game: Students are provided a thesis statement and must match up support “pieces” (paragraphs) that support it and eliminate ones that do not.
- Sketch/draw main ideas (eg. as cartoons). If they cannot see the details enough to draw them, they will not be able to write them.
- Each main idea is a scene that needs to be transferred into supporting details emphasizing transitions such as “for example” and “for instance.”
- Use the “Step Up to Writing” program (Google “Step Up to Writing” for more information)

3) To help students to format their Works Cited entries according to MLA formatting rules...

Most common:

- Samples/Models (as handouts, on the board, or on the screen)
- Test them on the formatting rules
- Make students do it in-class/in groups to help them through the process/check on each other’s work. Some take their students to a CCL to work on it.
Unique solutions:
- Peer review of students’ Works Cited pages
- Do it in class as a game/competition to get citation/documentation done accurately/first, to increase motivation/retention of the information.

4) To ensure that students insert appropriate in-text citations in their essays when summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources...

Most common:
- Handouts
- Samples (good/bad examples)
- Modeling
- Practice – isolated exercises (not in an actual essay) to focus on format
- Providing the source (often just one). This helps the instructor focus on effective use of citation rather than plagiarism.

Unique solutions:
- Using instructional videos
- Show the library’s tutorial on plagiarism
- Using conference time to review their MLA formatting/integration of source material
- Have students label their use of sources (marking each quote/summary/paraphrase to make them aware of how many citations they are using).
- Test them on proper citation
- Limit the page number of their research paper, to focus on citation/documentation
- Have students bring their sources to class, to practice quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing.
- Using a game: Post an effective article passage and have one group summarize it, one group paraphrase it, and one group quote from it. Later, the class looks at each group’s formatting.