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Here are basic guidelines for teaching English 1A, along with a few suggestions.

Students should read at least five separate works of literature, including at least two of book-length. Many instructors use a novel as one of the book-length works.

Students should write at least 8,000 words.

Students should be required to do some research-based writing, should learn MLA documentation format, should be made aware that other documentation formats may be required in other classes, and should be emphatically instructed about the issue of plagiarism. My own strong suggestion is that two or three short research-based essays work better as a teaching tool than one long research essay.

The English 1A mastery essay is a fifty-minute summary and response to a reading passage. Participation is at the discretion of individual instructors. Those who volunteer to participate meet usually in the twelfth week of the semester to review essays and assign scores (a copy of the rubric follows this page). Whether or not instructors choose to have their students participate in the 1A mastery process, it is important to have students do some in-class writing to get a sense of their capabilities when unassisted. An in-class essay early in the semester does not have to be counted heavily (or even counted at all), but it is usually a good way to establish what the students' vocabulary, style, and grammar skills are like.

Outcomes: Upon successful completion of English 1A, students should be able to do the following:

1. Narrow a topic to an appropriate focus, research the topic using both electronic and printed indexes, and evaluate the findings for use in a research paper.
2. Paraphrase, summarize, and quote source material for a research paper.
3. Evaluate sources for bias, currency, and applicability.
4. Compose a documented paper following assigned documentation guidelines.
5. Compose an expository essay, employing appropriate patterns of development, including introduction with a clear limited thesis, body supported with examples, illustrations, and explanation, and logical, consistent conclusion.
6. Compose a timed, on-demand essay in response to a prompt, similar to university-level competency examinations.
7. Revise essays for grammar, usage, structure, and content through self-evaluation, peer editing, and instructor comments. Students should be able to identify and eliminate from their writing most errors of these types: run-ons, fragments, subject-verb agreement, tense shifts, pronoun case, and pronoun reference.
8. Read, understand, and summarize essays and book-length works.