



Assessing and Responding to Student Writing



Spring Institute on Teaching with Writing
Communication Across the Curriculum



“Look at this paper! Students these days can’t write at all. Where do I even start?”

“Commenting on these drafts is such a chore. It takes hours. How do I possibly keep up?”

“Students ignored my comments on the last draft. I see basically the same problems in this new draft. Why do I bother?”



Today's Objective

To think *strategically* about our response to student writing

Awareness

- your patterns of response
- a wider range of approaches
- how students interpret/react

Choices

- the most effective approach, given the assignment, stage of writing, and student ability



Exercise 2:

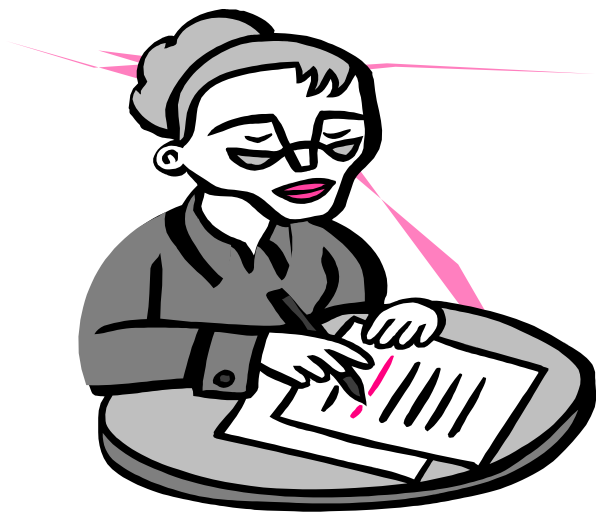
Look at the three response styles (a, b, c) in handout 2.

- What name would you give each style?
- Which is your “go to” approach when working with student drafts?
- Why—what are the benefits; what purpose does this kind of commentary serve?



The ~~guy~~ *usage*
^ *man* said he
disagreed

I comment line by line
I mark every error
I correct it for them



The Editor

Editor: Benefits/Costs



- It's easier to do it for them
- It's satisfying
- Modeling can help (if you explain WHY)
- Advanced writers may be able to emulate

- It can take a LOT of time
- Students feel overwhelmed
- Wasted effort if student needs significant content revisions.
- Writers will produce “cleaner” text but won't learn; errors may persist.
- Students lose ownership.

-RESERVE FOR LATER DRAFTS
-EXPLAIN PATTERNS OF ERROR,
MODEL, & ASK THEM TO “APPLY
THROUGHOUT”
-LIMIT TO THREE
-USE X NEXT TO LINE

I decide on the verdict
I insert evaluative labels
I expect students to
translate my verdict into
revisions

Weak!
GOOD!
Awk!



The Judge

Judge: Benefits/Costs

- It's easy, fastest approach
- It's satisfying
- Later, number of comments +/- can justify grade
- Encourages ownership; YOU figure it out (for advanced writers)

- Summative labels suggest writing is “done”, can discourage revision.
- Labels often not instructive; they know THAT the text is weak or strong, but not WHERE, WHY, or HOW to revise.



-RESERVE FOR FINAL DRAFTS
-QUICK EVALUATION WITH ADVANCED WRITER
-FOR ASSESSMENT, NOT TEACHING



The Process of Revision

(Flower et al.)

Detect → Diagnose → Apply Strategy



Judge

?



Editor

How do you define
this?
This contradicts
your previous point!
You see 3 causes?

I set priorities
I narrate my interpretation &
reactions
I index my comments
I teach, as needed
I suggest resources



The Helpful Reader

Helpful Reader: Benefits/Costs

- They become aware of the reader, start to internalize the reader
 - They can better diagnose problems & opportunities
 - They learn new strategies
 - They begin to set revision goals
-
- **Not as helpful for one-draft papers (unless repeating)**
 - **More advanced writers may not need *as much* explanation.**
 - **Becoming a helpful reader takes determination, takes up-front effort.**



- USE WITH NOVICES
- USE on 1st DRAFTS
- READ WHOLE DOC/SECT BEFORE COMMENTING
- TRY RUBRICS
- TRY END COMMENT + A FEW MARGINAL ONES
- CONSIDER AUDIO RESPONSE
- BEWARE TRACK CHANGES
- USE GUIDED PEER REVIEW

Exercise 3:

Read handout 1 again.

-Develop a checklist or rubric to prioritize criteria. Comment as a helpful reader.

- Try an end comment with limited marginal comments OR fill in your rubric

-Later, try an audio comment or Word's comment program if you haven't yet



TIPS

Beforehand

- Give them the rubric WITH the assignment.
- Have them develop and test the rubric with you on a sample.

When drafts are due in class

- Give writers 5 minutes to proof, write 1-P self review on back.
- Have a peer check for ONE thing. They should mark instances ; writer should revise.
- Do guided peer review or demo on one aspect of the paper. Give writers time to apply before collecting.

When you need to reduce the workload

- Train PLAs/TAs with rubric; they grade. Spot check.
- Have students choose 2-3 best pieces & revise for portfolio.
- Use comments for first draft; points-only rubric + end comment for final.
- Use cumulative sequence.