University Writing Program

WID WORKSHOP

Painless Final Paper Grading

Strategies for Evaluating Student Writing

2007

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Workshop Activity 1

Please answer the question "What makes grading final papers painful for you?" in the space below. We will share our thoughts about grading papers as we go around the room and introduce ourselves.

Take 20

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— *Stuart A. Selber, Penn State University*

Take 20
Teaching Writing
DVD
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The Questions

1. What do you remember about your first time teaching?
2. What are the aims of your writing courses?
3. What is the biggest surprise about teaching writing?
4. How do you organize your course syllabus?
5. What is the one thing that every writing teacher should know?
6. How do you design a lesson plan?
7. If you had to pick only one book for a writing teacher to read, what would it be?
8. **How do you create a writing assignment?**
9. If you had to pick only one essay for a writing teacher to read, what would it be?
10. How do you determine course content?
11. Who influenced your work the most?
12. How do you orchestrate peer groups?
13. If you had to select only one scholar for a writing teacher to read, who would it be?
14. How do you address process and product?
15. What do you wish you had been taught in grad school (but weren't)?
16. **How do you respond to student writing?**
17. What have you learned from your students?
18. How has technology (re)shaped your teaching?
19. What's next for writing teachers?
20. How do you approach difference?

Timesaving Techniques

Assignment Design

- ☐ Design good assignment instructions
- ☐ Clarify grading criteria
- ☐ Distribute scoring guides, rubrics, or checklists with assignment

Feedback

- ☐ Have students submit drafts
- ☐ Have students participate in peer review workshops for each draft
- ☐ Have students include a self-assessment with the paper
- ☐ In groups, have students rank each group member's work according to rubrics they (or you) develop
- ☐ When commenting on drafts only focus on one or two key issues
- ☐ Put minimal comments on final drafts that won't be revised

Assessment Tools

- ☐ Use rubrics or checklists
- ☐ Do a norming exercise with the class using the rubric or scoring guide
- ☐ Hold online conferences to discuss grades

Grading and Responding to Student Writing

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Source: http://www.uwp.vt.edu/html/online_resources/teaching/olr_menu_04_sub_2.htm

A. Investing Your Time Earlier In The Process

Often we wish simply to hand out the assignment and get back to the work of the course, assuming, if there are no immediate questions, that students "get it." Too often the students don't fully "get it," with the result that the process of completing such a project for students may be time-consuming and frustrating, the process of evaluating for me equally time-consuming and frustrating. This is unfortunate, since such small and large assignments, fully realized, ought to constitute the essential educational experiences of the course. Though many of the options below appear to be time-consuming, they can in fact lead to a reduction in time for students and teachers and, more importantly, a more productive, more fruitful use of that time.

1. Clearly explain criteria: Include your criteria for evaluating papers on the syllabus and/or on the assignment.

2. Model: Present and discuss in class a professional example or successful student example of the kind of writing you are asking for in the assignment.

3. Discuss the assignment: Go over the assignment aloud, sentence by sentence; clarify important terms; reword; illustrate with examples, analogies, metaphors or ask students to provide these.

4. Attempt the assignment yourself: Doing so may alert you to potential problems or pitfalls in the assignment design, help you determine evaluative criteria, or persuade you to foreground certain key concerns in class.

5. Include informal writing: Build in to the assignment ungraded writing that will help students better understand it and will help you gauge students' progress. Examples of such writing: a paraphrase of the assignment immediately after you hand it out, a prospectus, a progress statement or self-evaluation mid-way through the project, a cover letter or memo on top of the final paper.

6. Conference with students: If time, see each student half-way through a project to help them develop and revise. Make your key contribution here; put a grade and only minimal comments on the final paper. Even seeing just a few students can clue you in to common problems which you can then address and help remedy in class.

7. Use peer review: Set some time aside for students to read and comment on classmates' drafts. If written peer critiques are submitted with the final paper, you may find yourself agreeing with some or all of the critique; point to it in your comment to save yourself time.

8. Respond to drafts: Tell students you will comment on drafts, giving only a grade on the final paper.

B. Working Through The Pile

1. Review criteria before grading: Know exactly what you expect of an A paper, and how you will differentiate among A, B, C, D, and F papers.

2. Locate range finders: Preferably with a peer, set aside one or two representative As, Bs, Cs, Ds which can act as touchstones if you lose focus or struggle with a given student's work.

3. Read through the writing once without commenting: Respond-as-you-go is a tough habit to break, but it can interrupt the flow of your reading too often, creating frustration and comprehension problems.

4. Separate problem papers: Agonizing over problem paper may disrupt your reading; deal with these papers later, perhaps calling upon a second reader for help.

5. Take breaks: Learn to read your fatigue signs and schedule breaks at strategic times. Don't read an entire batch of papers in one sitting.

C. Responding Strategies

1. Tailor responses to individual writers: Address an individual human being and sign your name to your response; if possible, connect this writing to other writings the student has done in the course and/or address the student's progress.

2. Make precise comments that refer to specific information in student texts: Generic comments--"some of your reasoning breaks down in places," "develop your analysis further"--can't be acted upon; point to particular moments in the text, pose specific questions, etc.

3. Treat a limited number of issues in a given paper: You can't do it all, and multiple suggestions or criticisms can overwhelm students; prioritize and suggest two or three things to work on.

4. Balance positive and negative modes of commentary: Help students see what they do well as well as what they need to work on.

5. Invoke the student's intended audience: Reinforce audience awareness by explaining how a student's tone, word choice, organization, etc. would affect the intended audience.

6. Shift proofreading and copy-editing responsibility to the student: Correcting errors for students will not help them learn to correct errors themselves. On the first set of papers, you may choose to identify representative errors by means of labels, handbook references, or checks in the margins, but these props should rapidly fall away as students assume responsibility themselves for finding and correcting errors. A recent study found students able to identify and correct 61.1% of all errors on their own with careful proofreading.

Holistic Scoring

"Holistic scoring is based on the theory that the whole is more than the sum of its parts and that the most valid assessment of writing will consider how all components of writing—organization, voice, mechanics, and so forth—work in harmony to achieve an overall effect."

SOURCE: Spandel V. & R.J. Stiggins. (1990). *Creating Writers: Linking assessment and writing instruction.* New York: Longman p. 6)

Some Words about Paper Assessment

I want to say a few words about my grading standards. Writing is an essential academic skill as well as an important thinking and learning tool. Learning to write well—which means not simply producing technically correct prose, but crafting writing that is imaginative, persuasive, and informed as to the expectations of its audience—is a lengthy process that requires learning about, practicing, and eventually being able to manipulate successfully a complex array of skills. In this class, we will work on both the mechanics of your writing as well as content organization and development. We will fortify your understanding of correct sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation. We will also practice techniques for greater clarity and style in your writing. As a college level writing course, your papers will be expected to go beyond merely summarizing what you have read and include your own original ideas, syntheses, and reflections. Moreover, your papers will be required to follow Chicago style conventions in integrating and citing sources. My standards and criteria for evaluating your writing in this class will be based on your ability to demonstrate your understanding and application of all of these elements.

In grading your papers, I will use the "Skeletal Scale for Evaluating Papers" developed by the Indiana University Campus Writing Program http://www.iub.edu/~cwp/assgn/skelscale.shtml. A copy of the scale is provided below.

Modified Skeletal Scale for Evaluating Papers

A	A paper that receives an **A** is excellent in thought, organization, and style. The **A** paper uses a sound organizational strategy, with clearly developed paragraphs proceeding from a unified thesis. The ideas in the paper are engaging and show illuminating insights into the work being studied. Assertions are supported by textual evidence (not necessarily quotations) and expand on the thoughts and ideas presented in the scholarship. There are very few distracting errors in style, diction, or mechanics.
B	A **B** paper is still be quite good, but it can be weaker than an **A** paper in some areas. It may have good ideas that are marred by some problems of organization and style. Alternatively, it may be well-organized and well-written but offer fewer or less valuable insights than an **A** paper.
C	This is the grade given to a paper that is clearly acceptable, but not exceptional. A **C** paper will show a competent understanding of the assigned topic, but its insights usually do not go beyond the obvious points that most papers make. A **C** may also be assigned to an inconsistent paper that shows some excellent insights but fails to tie ideas into a unified whole.
D	A **D** paper can have some virtues—either occasionally good ideas marred by unclear writing or clear writing conveying superficial ideas that show a lack of engagement with the work being studied.
F	A paper will receive an **F** either because it is poorly written throughout or because its ideas show no insight into the work being studied, or the paper is completely unacceptable--obviously written in haste without thought or effort.

NOTE: This scale does not reflect pluses or minuses, such as the differences between a B-, B, and B+. Instead, each grade scale presents a continuum of qualities and characteristics of good writing. How well your writing accomplishes all the identified qualities will determine its position on the continuum for each grade.

Analytical Scoring

"Analytical scoring acknowledges the underlying premise of holistic scoring that the whole is, indeed, more than the sum of its parts, but it adds that if we're to teach students to write, we must find a way to define the components of good writing and to talk intelligently about them in a language that student writers can understand and use in revision. Analytical scoring, then, is an attempt to define the main straits or characteristics of writing (e.g., *ideas*, *organization*) and to specify criteria that describe each of these traits in terms of the relevant strengths and weaknesses that we are likely to see in real samples of student writing."

SOURCE: Spandel V. & R.J. Stiggins. (1990). *Creating Writers: Linking assessment and writing instruction.* New York: Longman p. 6)

Sample Checklist

Source: Political Science/JSIS/LSJ Writing Center
http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/grading.html

Content
The paper...
- ☐ Addresses the topic or question
- ☐ Accurately presents assigned authors' viewpoints
- ☐ Provides sufficient textual evidence to support the argument

Structure
The introduction...
- ☐ Is present in the paper
- ☐ Includes a clearly stated thesis
- ☐ Indicates how the paper is organized

The body...
- ☐ Contains a complete discussion and support

Each paragraph...
- ☐ Includes a topic sentence
- ☐ Develops one main idea
- ☐ Has a transition sentence linking it to the next paragraph

The conclusion...
- ☐ Recaps the thesis statement and the essay's main points
- ☐ Presents a closing statement of the writer's position

Organization and Development
The entire composition
- ☐ Is logically organized
- ☐ Has a solid argument with supporting evidence

Main points
- ☐ Are relevant to the thesis statement
- ☐ Are discussed without too much repetition

Style
- ☐ Is concise and precise
- ☐ Is free of misspellings
- ☐ Is free of grammatical mistakes
- ☐ Lacks incomplete sentences
- ☐ Uses correct punctuation
- ☐ Includes subject/verb agreement
- ☐ Uses pronouns correctly
- ☐ Is free of jargon and cliches
- ☐ Cites references correctly

Source: Political Science/JSIS/LSJ Writing Center
Tools for TAs and Instructors
http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/grading.html

Grading Rubrics

SOURCE: http://www.gwu.edu/~uwp/wid/wid-gradingrubrics.htm

Advantages of Grading Rubrics**:** Grading rubrics are an effective way to regularize and simplify the evaluation process and are helpful to both instructor and student. There are many grading rubrics in common use, with variations from discipline to discipline. Several examples are identified below, but it is best to develop your own. Discuss your grading rubric with your students at the time when you make an assignment; this will clarify your goals and give your students a checklist against which to guide their own work during the composition process. Moreover, as the semester progresses and your students begin to collect rubric-based assessments from several assignments, they can more readily identify recurring problems or weaknesses and persistent strengths as well, and thus know what they need to work on for greater success in the future.

Advantages:

- Students know assessment criteria throughout the writing process
- Effective way to regularize the grading process
- Effective way to simplify the grading process

Establishing Grading Criteria: First, decide on the several criteria you wish to use in evaluating your students' work—from quality of thinking and mastery of subject to organization and mechanics. These criteria might be defined in terms of goals—goals for the assignment; goals for the course. Then consider the relative importance of each criterion and weight them accordingly. Is writing correct prose as important as demonstrating powerful analytical or interpretive skills? Is having a thesis as important as providing adequate evidence to support the thesis, or is it more important?

Setting the Evaluation Scale: Next, decide on a ratings scale, with a set number of gradations for each criterion. Some instructors use a five- or six-point scale; others prefer just three levels, ranging from weak through adequate or average and up to strong or outstanding.

Risks and Countermeasures: Rubrics have one disadvantage: They carry the risk of turning evaluation and grading into a mechanical process. To minimize the potential for this, be sure to provide discursive comments—praise and blame—in your assessments.

Concerns:

- Some graders find segmenting the paper into specific items counter to their holistic understanding of writing
- Some feel that rubrics turn evaluation and grading into a mechanical process
- Some dislike using points that may add up to more or less than the grade the paper seems to merit

Online Rubric Generators

- Rubistar http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php
- TeAchnology - http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/

San Jose State University
Writing rubric used in an upper division geology classes
SOURCE: http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/assessment/tools/writing/

Grading Rubric for Written Assignments

All take-home writing assignments will be graded according to the rubric described below. As specified in the guidelines for GE courses, I will assess not only the content but also the quality and clarity of your writing. Note that the two components are equally weighted.

score	~grade	Content criteria
5	A+	Outstanding response with superior supporting examples or evidence; unusual insights, creative and original analysis, reasoning, and explanation; superior mastery of content; goes well beyond minimum required for the assignment.
4	B+	Good, solid response that uses excellent supporting examples or evidence; excellent reasoning and explanations; goes beyond the minimum required for the assignment.
3	B-	Good, solid response that meets minimum required by assignment. Reasoning and explanations are adequate.
2	C-	Response is accurate but cursory, and does not meet the minimum required for completeness; some inaccuracies or reasoning flaws; response is too general, lacks specific evidence.
1	D	Response doesn't effectively address the question; response fails to support assertions with data or examples; major flaws in reasoning; explanations are unclear; displays inadequate understanding of content.
0	F	Response is missing or not submitted, or does not address the question.

score	~grade	Writing criteria
5	A	Meets criteria for 4, plus demonstrates superior grammatical correctness and sense of personal style. Effortlessly readable prose.
4	B+	Very effective organization of paragraphs and paper; interesting, varied sentences; good grammar (usage, punctuation, etc.); few spelling mistakes; does not read like a first draft.
3	C+	Reasonably effective organization of paragraphs and paper; serviceable prose; numerous errors of grammar or spelling; reads like a first draft.
2	C-	Structurally disorganized; paragraphs lack topic sentences or are not developed effectively; awkward sentence structure; poor grammar; poor spelling.
1	D-	Similar to 2, but even harder to read.

HIST 300.01 - Seminar in Historical Analysis
SOURCE: http://bss.sfsu.edu/jrodriguez/courses/300/rubric.htm

Paper Evaluation Rubric

You may use the following guidelines to get a sense of how the research paper will be graded and to understand your particular grade. This rubric is only a guideline. Above all, keep this in mind:

"A good style is, first of all, clear. The proof is that language which does not convey a clear meaning fails to perform the very function of language."

--Aristotle, Rhetoric (Book III:2)

The Superior Paper (A/A-)

Thesis: Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear.
Structure: Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.
Use of evidence: Primary source information used to buttress every point with at least one example. Examples support mini-thesis and fit within paragraph. Excellent integration of quoted material into sentences. Excellent integration of secondary sources.
Analysis: Author clearly relates evidence to mini-thesis; analysis is fresh and exciting, posing new ways to think of the material.
Logic and argumentation: All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Counterarguments in the historiography are acknowledged and where possible refuted.
Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and diction excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or awkward constructions; limited or no use of the passive voice.

The Good Paper (B+/B/B-)

Thesis: Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality.
Structure: Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.
Use of evidence: Examples used to support most points. Some evidence does not support point, or may appear where inappropriate. Quotations well integrated into sentences. Above average integration of secondary sources.
Analysis: Evidence often related to mini-thesis, though links perhaps not very clear.
Logic and argumentation: Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed.
Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar, and diction strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some (minor) spelling errors; may have a couple of run-on sentences, sentence fragments, or other awkward constructions; a couple of sentences in the passive voice.

The "Need Help" Paper (C+/C/C-)

Thesis: May be unclear (contain many vague terms), appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper.
Structure: Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences.
Use of evidence: Examples used to support some points. Points often lack supporting evidence, or evidence used where inappropriate (often because there may be no clear point). Quotes may be poorly integrated into sentences.
Analysis: Quotes appear often without analysis relating them to mini-thesis (or there is a weak mini-thesis to support), or analysis offers nothing beyond the quote. Poor to weak integration of secondary sources.
Logic and argumentation: Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments. May contain logical contradictions.
Mechanics: Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences or fragments; more than a couple of sentences are in the passive voice.

The Truly Needy Paper (D+/D/D-)

Thesis: Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.
Structure: Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.
Use of evidence: Very few or very weak examples. General failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no statement. Quotes not integrated into sentences; "plopped in" in improper manner.
Analysis: Very little or very weak attempt to relate evidence to argument; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate it to. Little or no use of secondary sources.
Logic and argumentation: Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views. Many logical contradictions, or simply too incoherent to determine.
Mechanics: Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices; abundant use of the passive voice.

The Failing Paper

Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment.
Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis or the thesis is utterly incompetent.

The Problem with Comments & Grades

"I don't even understand what the grade means on my paper. The top says something like a B and then all the comments say positive things and then there are all these errors marked. Then the person next to me wrote only half as much as I did and has even more errors marked and he got an A. It just doesn't make any sense to me."

SOURCE: O'Hagan L. (1997). It's broken—fix it! In S. Tchudi (Ed.). *Alternatives to Grading Student Writing* (pp.7). Urbana, Illinois: NCTE

Students' Responses to Teachers' Comments

Needs to be more concise	**You haven't really thought this through**
• Confusing. I need to know what the teacher means specifically. • This is an obvious comment. • I'm not Einstein. I can't get every point right. • I thought you wanted details and support. • This frustrates me! • Define "concise." • Vague, vague.	• This is a mean reply • I guess I blew it! • I'm upset. • That makes me madder than you can imagine! • How do you know what I thought?
Be more specific	**Try harder!**
• You be more specific • I'm frustrated • I tried and it didn't pay off • It's going to be too long then • I feel mad—it really doesn't matter. • I try, but I don't know every fact	• I did try! • You're a stupid jerk • Maybe I am trying as hard as I can • I feel like kicking the teacher • Baloney! You don't know how hard I tried. • This kind of comment makes me feel really bad and I'm frustrated!

Source: Spandel V. & R.J. Stiggins. (1990). *Creating Writers: Linking assessment and writing instruction* (pp. 84-86). New York: Longman.

Ten Tips for Evaluating Student Writing

Source: Excerpts from Toby Fulwiler's "The Argument for Writing Across the Curriculum."
Writing Across the Disciplines. Young and Fulwiler, eds. Dartsmouth NH: Boynton / Cook, 1986.
http://www.manhattan.edu/services/wac/pages/responding_to_writing/tips_for_evaluating.html

1. Respond To The Content First, Not The Mechanics, Of Each Paper You Read. Too often we become a bit jaded or tired as readers of student writing and spend more time looking for errors than ideas. In the process we can become absolutely fixated on sentence- and word-level problems and never read the paper for its larger intention. While I'm not counseling that we ignore sentence inconsistencies, I am reminding us to let the writer know that we have considered--for good or ill--the integrity of that intention. Otherwise, we treat this act of communication as a mechanical exercise--and surely, if we have made a careful, thoughtful assignment, we don't want to do that.

2. Respond Positively And Personally Where Possible. Again, no absolutes here, but I believe that writers begin to care about their writing when they see that we care about it. Caring is the necessary first step to actually writing better. A corollary of that is that it's difficult to work on a piece--revising it and editing it--when nothing encouraging has been said about it. Most acts of student writing are mixtures of more and less good work; be sure to comment as much on the "more" as you do the "less." I address my comment to students by name, as I would in a letter, and I sign my comments with my name--a dimension of personal interaction that improves our communication with each other.

3. Revise Early Drafts; Edit Later Drafts; Grade Final Drafts. When you put a grade on a draft, you have treated it as a finished product, as if the learning process is already and altogether over (Martin, 1976). If you are asking your students to put their writing through several draft stages, keep in mind that the motivation to revise a D- paper is low. Better, I think, to point out where the paper is strong as well as weak conceptually and ask for a rewrite, grade aside. Once a draft is conceptually together, with good internal logic and evidence, then we can turn attention to matters of voice, tone, and style which are really acts of editing on the sentence level. When you and the student pronounce this act of writing/learning finished, that's the time to grade it.

4. Comment Critically On One Item At A Time. It's easy to overwhelm students who have written a weak or uncertain paper with all sorts of negative comments and a plethora of suggestions about what to do next. While the intention behind such active criticism is well-intentioned--certainly better than giving the paper a rote F--such teacher commentary may not accomplish its purpose. Once you see that a paper has multiple problems, it may be a good idea to single out one or two conceptual or organizational problems for comment, suggesting that the other problems will be dealt with on subsequent drafts. This way the student has a clearer idea of what to do next; it may surprise you both how many smaller problems will be cleared up in that initial act of revision, so that you may never need to spend time on this at all. And use pencil--it's more forgiving on both of you.

5. Be Specific When You Comment On Problems. I remember being coached by a fine writing teacher to avoid all those funny symbols on the front covers of handbooks (frag., comma splice, etc.); he argued that students were only more confused by them and that not all teachers used the same symbols anyhow. He suggested instead just using one comment, "Awk," for everything. But his solution, while it worked for him because he had frequent personal conferences, can be equally confusing for novice writers who don't yet trust their own ears. Point out exactly what you object to but without necessarily correcting it yourself; that way the writer has something concrete to go on when he or she turns attention to revision.

6. Edit A Page Or Two, Not The Whole Paper. Too often colleagues report going over an entire error-filled student paper with the best critical eye, suggesting changes in language everywhere, but in the process doing most of the work which should done by the writer. And too often at the end of a term we've all seen piles of papers meticulously edited by the teachers and never even picked up by the students. What a waste of professional time and energy! To solve both problems at once, show the student what constructions or stylistic problems bother you on the first page or two and how to fix these, then ask the student to edit by example the rest of his or her work. That saves all of us time and places the editing responsibility where it rightfully belongs.

7. **Learning To Critique Is A Part Of Learning To Write.** Include peer evaluation where you can in your class. In addition to receiving help with one's own paper in a writing group, one learns what to look for and how to respond in order to help others with their papers (Hawkins, 1976). Learning how to be critical is part of learning how to write yourself. We all know how much easier it is to see problems in someone else's writing; what that suggests, of course, is that we have a critical distance here that we don't have from our own work. But the process needs to start somewhere. When I first introduce peer criticism into a class, I do it with students, myself, and sometimes provide directions for what to look for. As I said before, the first time they do it will not usually be successful, but subsequent meetings will get better quickly.

8. Discuss Samples Of Good And Bad Writing With Your Class. I use the same technique here as for making assignments. I project papers that are well-written as well as those with problems and talk them over with my class. They see, often as quickly as I, what works and what doesn't, but especially they see by example what they have done well or poorly in their own work. Here again you're bringing the students into the evaluation process, trusting them to have voices and make reasonable judgments. Another good idea, suggested to me first by a history teacher: before handing papers back--and I always do this now--read out loud from several papers you consider good and explain why you like them. Students seem to find this both unusual and highly enjoyable: taking time to introduce the students' expression of a relevant idea to the class.

9. *What* Is Said Includes *How* It Is Said: Don't Split Grades. I never find agreement at a workshop on this one, but I believe it is important to quit separating ideas from the language in which they're expressed. For one thing, when something is known or understood well, the chances are that the writer will express it well; conversely, a lot of poor writing (wordy, rambling, evasive, digressive, disorganized, over-generalized) results from inadequate knowledge and poor understanding. For another thing, such grade-splitting reinforces the notion that English teachers are rightfully concerned with "mere expression" and the other folks with "true content." Politically, across the university, that's a troublesome belief; conceptually, for me, it's unacceptable. One grade: how good a job is it?

10. Understand That Good Writing Depends On Audience And Purpose. At writing workshops, we all spend some time exploring what kind of language may be appropriate for a given situation or audience. The academy seems to sanction a distanced, objective, neutral voice as that which best conveys fact and truth; however, most human beings enjoy reading a more lively, personal writing that shows a clear authorial voice--which voice is fully capable of conveying some pretty hefty ideas. The consensus which emerges from most workshop groups is that style is a matter of what is appropriate rather than what is correct. So we need to show students that different voices will work for different purposes, that memos demand one style and letters another; that the same goes for book reviews, term papers, and professional reports. The trick is, of course, to be good in all modes to all audiences.

SOURCE: **http://www.indiana.edu/~cwp/lib/gradebib.shtml**

Articles on Grading and Marking

Listed below are articles on this topic from the Campus Writing Program library. Short summaries and citations are provided when available.

Greenberg, Karen L. "Assessing Writing: Theory and Practice." McMillan, J.H., ed., *Assessing Students' Learning. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 34*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988. 47-59.

> Describes methods for assessing writing in any discipline: holistic scoring, evaluative grid, portfolios, peer review and self evaluation. Includes examples of all methods except portfolio evaluation.

Haswell, Richard H. "Minimal Marking." *College English* 45.6 (Oct. 1983): 600-604.

> Argues for a "minimal marking" approach to grammatical/mechanical mistakes in student writing: simply indicate, using a check in the margin of the paper, where such mistakes are, and force the student to pinpoint and correct them. Presents data indicating that students can and do correct mistakes marked in this way, most of the time. The technique also reduces the number of errors that appear in first drafts.

Holt, Dennis. "Holistic Scoring in Many Disciplines." *College Teaching* 41.2 (1993): 71-74.

> Outlines methods used in holistic scoring: determining general standards for an assignment, making comparative judgments about quality. Explains adaptations for assessing writing in particular circumstances and across disciplines.

Lees, Elaine O. "Evaluating Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 30.4 (Dec. 1979): 370-374.

> Discusses how to comment profitably to student writing. Divides marginal commentary into correcting (overemphasizes errors), emoting (elicits So What?), describing (doesn't help student revise), suggesting (might help this paper, but not others), questioning (might get student to rethink), reminding (could connect lecture to paper), and assigning (can actually get student to re-see the issue).

McDonald, W.U., Jr. "The Revising Process and the Marking of Student Papers." *College Composition and Communication* 29.2 (May 1978): 167 170.

Discusses how to respond appropriately to preliminary drafts of student papers. Among first things to look for: a focus or thesis (which may be at the end rather than the beginning of the paper). Also of first importance: content, coherence, and clarity. In later drafts can concentrate more on grammar/mechanics.

Robertson, Michael. "Writing and Responding." Schwartz, Mimi, ed., *Writer's Craft, Teacher's Art: Teaching What We Know*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991. 115-124.

Describes the author's approach to commenting on or responding to student writing, which is based on his experiences with an editor at a NYC magazine and is based on a medical/diagnosis analogy. Gives 4 principles to use in responding: most comments should be aimed at revision; respond to content; establish a dialogue; and point out general principles of good writing.

Slattery, Patrick. "Encouraging Critical Thinking: A Strategy of Commenting on College Papers." *College Composition and Communication* 41 (October 1990): 332-335.

Suggests types of comments that can be made on student papers to encourage critical thinking: a support response and a challenge response.

Smith, Summer. "The Genre of the End Comment: Conventions in Teacher Responses to Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 48.2 (1997): 249-268.

Categorizes sixteen primary genres of end comments from a representative sample of papers. End comments may combine genres, but the form itself is stable. Smith contends that the stability of the form makes the end comment easy to generate, but also may make the comment pedagogically ineffective. Students may recognize the formulaic approach, and thus dismiss the comment without reading it, while instructors may find that writing according to convention restricts their choices.

Sommers, Nancy. "Responding to Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 33.2 (May 1982): 148-156.

Study of comments by professors on student papers. Findings: Profs' comments have effect of appropriating text from students to profs. Profs' comments are not text-specific and, in fact, could be put anywhere on any paper. Suggestions: don't comment on mechanical errors on first draft; provide comments that force students to rethink or clarify their position on an issue.

Workshop Activity 2

List two things you learned today you can use the next time you grade to student writing.