

A workshop presented by New York City College of
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EFFECTIVE GRADING STRATEGIES

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Two Main Goals

- I. Improve student writing
- II. Reduce your grading time

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What do we look for and mark when grading writing?

Working together in a group, take two minutes to brainstorm the elements that you evaluate when grading a student paper (e.g. thesis, spelling, etc.)

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Higher-Order Concerns

- ⊙ Thesis statement
- ⊙ Quality of argument/ideas
- ⊙ Evidence used correctly
- ⊙ Logic of conclusions
- ⊙ Use of topic sentences
- ⊙ Organization of paper
- ⊙ Follows assignment?

Lower-Order Concerns

- ⊙ Spelling
- ⊙ Grammar (agreement)
- ⊙ Formatting (font, spacing)
- ⊙ Citation
- ⊙ Punctuation
- ⊙ Sentence structure
- ⊙ Vocabulary/word choice
- ⊙ Style

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Instructor Feedback: What is our intent?

How do students perceive feedback?

- Improving vs. correcting
- Coach vs. judge
- Assessment to facilitate revisions vs. copy editing

Video—Beyond the Red Ink: Teacher's Comments Through Students' Eyes

Students at Bunker Hill Community College,
Boston, MA

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Effective Grading Strategies Overview

◎ **Strategies:**

1. Minimal marking
2. Supportive responding
3. Rubrics
4. Planning ahead to make grading more efficient

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Strategy # 1: Minimal Marking

- ◎ Focus on higher-order concerns (organization, etc.) not on grammatical structure
- ◎ Focus on patterns (global errors)
 - Aim for one comment per error type
- ◎ Additional tips for multiple-draft assignments:
 - Straight and squiggly lines
 - Line-edit one or two paragraphs only
 - Avoid comments on things that will be removed
 - Identify sentences with errors, but leave corrections to students

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Minimal Marking: Avoid comments on material that will be removed (Sommers)

Every year ^{wordy - be precise} ~~on~~ ^{which Sunday?} one Sunday in the middle of January ^{comma needed} tens of millions of

people ^{word choice} cancel all events, plans or work to watch the Super Bowl. This

audience includes ^{wordy} [little boys and girls, old people, and housewives and

men.] ^{Be specific - what reasons?} Many reasons have been given to explain why the Super Bowl has

become so popular ^{and why?} ~~the~~ ^{what spots?!} commercial (spots cost up to \$100,000.00.

^{awkward} One explanation is that people like to take sides and root for a team.

^{another what?} Another is that some people like the ^{spelling} pageantry and excitement of the

event. These reasons alone, however, do not explain ^{too colloquial} a happening as big as

the Super Bowl.

You need to do more research

This paragraph needs to be expanded in order to be more interesting to a reader.

Strategy # 2: Supportive Responding

- Use any color ink or pencil... **except red**
- Ask questions
- Write in legible, complete sentences
- Try little or no negative criticism in margins
- Positive reinforcement
 - “Your supporting arguments need some development, but your thesis statement is clear and strong.”
 - “You have this one great topic sentence here— now add similar topic sentences to your other paragraphs!”

Supportive Responding (Walk)

Associations unite people of similar interests, and are therefore an important component in a participatory government.

Associations function ^{in Tocqueville's view} to teach citizens "the habits of acting together in the affairs of daily life" (514). In this way, citizens not only enjoy the benefits of sharing the common bond of living in a community, but they also prepare themselves through the experience for self-government.

Attribute quotations more clearly, like this

What happens to self-interested citizens in this scheme?

This is an excellent point. Here (as elsewhere) you could strengthen your argument by adding an example. Maybe the NAACP?

Strategy # 2: Supportive Responding—End Comments

- Sandwich negative comments between positive ones
- Personalize the response
- Make neutral descriptions – this is what you did (I am aware of what you're doing)
- Type if possible or helpful
 - Can save time on drafts because you can re-read your old comments

Group Grading Exercise

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Strategy #3: Rubrics

- Can use as checklist
 - For you and for student
- Makes grading technique transparent to students
- Makes grading more directed
- Effective way to communicate goals to students
- Holistic vs. task-specific

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Strategy # 4: Planning ahead to make grading more efficient

- Not all assignments need to be graded
 - Try check-in assignments
 - Try uncollected writing assignments
- Peer Review
- Learning Center

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