

# Teaching Writing in the Disciplines: Creating & Managing Effective Writing Assignments



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# Overview of Topics



1. What is good writing?
2. How to use good writing principles to guide students to write well.
3. How to grade efficiently.

# Group Work



- In groups of four, identify six aspects of good writing, excluding grammar and punctuation.
- Rank the aspects from most important to least.
- Report and compare.

# Guiding Students to Write Well



- Allow for the process of writing
- Model good writing
- Use rubrics to teach writing outcomes

# Writing as a Process



- Planning
- Drafting
- Revision
- Editing

# Writing as a Process



- **Planning (aka Pre-Writing)**
  - Brainstorming
  - Free-Writing
  - Journaling
  - Vetting of Topics
  - Rough Outlining

# Writing as a Process



- **Drafting**
  - Detailed Outlining
  - Writing Workshops
  - Library Research
  - Primary Data Collection

# Writing as a Process



- **Revision**
  - Peer Reviews
  - Conferencing



# Writing as a Process



- **Editing**
  - Manuscript Form
  - Grammar/Mechanics
  - Polishing for Clarity and Style
  - Time to Think and Gain Perspective

# Model Good Writing



- Writing is learned by imitation, not magic
- Offer examples of A-quality work of the appropriate genre and length
- Annotate models with your own advice

# Rubrics



- Use general writing or style rubrics to establish broad levels of expectation
- Use genre-specific rubrics to establish writing outcomes

# Grading with Rubrics



- Rubrics make grading seem less arbitrary
- Puts more of the responsibility for the grade on the student

# Types of Rubrics



- General and applicable to all types of papers
- Specific and keyed to a particular assignment
- Prioritized checklist

# Grading Effectively



- Effective time management
- Effective pen strokes
- Effective feedback

# Effective Time Management



- Read the papers through once to get an overall sense of the responses
- Move papers into ranges of grades
- Use a timer
- Allow no more than 15 minutes per paper (for longer assignments)

# Effective Pen Strokes



- Focus on global concerns or stylistic problems
- Mark errors on the first page only
- Mark only representative errors
- Place checks in the margins where errors occur



# Effective Feedback



- Terminal comments are most important messages.
- Document the strengths and weaknesses

# After Action Report



- Explain whether the students responded well to the assignment
- Encourage or discourage specific writing behaviors
- Set goals for future assignments

# Effective Use of Technology



- Return error-laden essays for proofreading and correction
- Use style editors or other software packages to scan student writing for error
- Have students peer-edit before final draft is due

# L2 Writers and Responding



- Content should be primary focus
- Sentence-level issues should be addressed by patterns of error
- Concentrate on marking those errors that interfere with the writer's message
- Demonstrate where the student has used a part of speech correctly.

# Recommended Books



- Anything published by William Zinsser
- Books on “Style” by Joseph Williams
- *Revising Business Prose* by Richard Lanham
- *Writing in the Sciences: Exploring Conventions of Scientific Discourse*, by Ann Penrose and Steven B. Katz