



### More Strategies for Commenting on Student Papers

It can be very frustrating to read final student papers!!! A good rule-of-thumb is to read through the whole paper before making comments. One of my favorite scholarly supports for this practice follows:

“Read the [student’s] paper before you comment to avoid wasting time on ‘spasms of irritation”  
 (Peter Elbow)

Students typically do not take our final comments seriously; they rarely transfer the comments to future writing. So, do not waste your time making them!! Consider using a rubric that you have previously shared with students. You do not need to lock yourself into a rubric with nit-picky points attached to each item! Instead, consider something like the following. Then, simply add some “reader-response” type comments at the end of the paper:

### Assessment Rubric

	<b>Competency</b>	<b>Fails Competency</b> √ -	<b>Competent</b> √	<b>Exceeds Competency</b> √ +
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes appropriate original title</li> <li>• Meets requirements: subject, organization, and length</li> <li>• Presents a clear thesis about a moral dilemma</li> <li>• Gives background or reasons for the problem in the introduction: why this issue is a problem, why people disagree about the problem, and lists the main points of the paper</li> <li>• Bases evidence on synthesized scholarly sources</li> <li>• Concludes with explanation of the “so what?” to the paper and recommends future action</li> </ul>			
<b>Organization (Format)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes required headings and subheadings to show the reader how the author emphasizes the main points</li> <li>• Fully develops each section</li> </ul>			

<p><b>Style &amp; Expression</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminates wordiness; concise</li> <li>• Includes a topic sentence, evidence, and discussion for body paragraphs</li> <li>• Eliminates unnecessary repetition</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Grammar &amp; Mechanics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminates errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics</li> <li>• Correctly uses APA or Turabian guidelines for in-text citation</li> <li>• Provides References or Bibliography with a minimum of 8 sources</li> </ul>			

Adapted from Hewett, B. L. (2015). *Reading to learn and writing to teach: Literacy strategies for online writing instruction*. Bedford/St. Martins.

**Other helpful advice for grading final papers:**

Be sure to praise what the writer does well.

Remain respectful and helpful even when fatigued.

Comment substantively on the one or two most important features of a draft, determined either by your prompt & rubrics or by your reader response.

Comment most on the greatest strength and the major weakness; use a rubric for the rest.

**Helpful examples of feedback can be found online; here is one example from a former BYU student who uses Jim Faulconer’s methods:**

James C Olsen <https://blogs.commonsgorgetown.edu/jco34/sample-assignments/examples-of-feedback-on-student-writing/>

**Reward yourself throughout the grading process – get up and move around frequently; take a break; eat snacks; and remember when you were a student what you would have liked to have seen in comments on your papers!!**

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