



## Offer Insightful Feedback on Student Papers Without Spending Excessive Time

### Prioritize Your Comments

- No student will miraculously change because of a comment we make on their papers.
- Prioritize your comments and be specific.
- Limit comments to about 3 per page.

Some instructors find that drafting a “template” of responses can help them make thorough, relevant comments. This is particularly helpful if you grade electronically and can simply copy and paste appropriate comments on the student’s paper. Or consider marking a rubric and attaching it to the students’ papers.

### Typically Do NOT Waste Time Commenting on Mechanical Errors

We should rarely mark a student’s errors; simply inform him or her how egregious the errors are (“errors distract from or distort the meaning of the claim,” “errors distract attention from the credibility of the student author,” “errors interfere with the understanding of your results,” etc.).

Unless your top priority is a mistake-free paper regardless of content, do NOT waste time commenting on students’ editing errors!! This outrageous claim is supported by scholars:

“There is scant evidence that students routinely use comments on one draft to make rhetorically important, and in the end qualitatively superior, changes in a subsequent draft.” However, students may make limited, usually superficial corrections in response to comments on mechanical issues. There is little to no evidence to show that students “change their practices from one assignment to the next in ways that measurably represent or affect their development as writers” [Little or no transfer] (p. 1). So it is most likely a waste of our time to mark the editing errors.

“Inexperienced writers in secondary and college courses engage in little substantive reworking of the content and organization of rough drafts; revising often consists of ‘polishing’ minor editorial matters” (Richard Beach, p. 46).

“Students may simply not be capable of using their own or a teacher’s evaluation to define and then make the appropriate revisions. Students may change their rough drafts, but change does not necessarily result in improvement” (Richard Beach, p. 47). Straub, R. (Ed.) (2006). *Key works on teacher response: An anthology*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Pub.

### Reduce Long Grading Sessions in the Future

We can better help our students and save time correcting papers by using some of the following:

- (1) Facilitate with our comments – not “judge”
- (2) Require multiple-draft assignments to guide revision
- (3) Actually teach writing + re-writing (revision, not just “editing”)
- (4) Limit the number of comments on each page; refer to the global issues (your top priorities)
- (5) Confirm that students understand our comments so they can revise (**It is not until the second draft that students begin to understand their own claim**) (C. H. Knoblauch & Lil Brannon, p. 75)

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