

7 Tips for...

Grading Student Writing

Ms. Suzanne Ingram,
University Writing Program

with Robin Cavin,
M.A. Candidate, Communication Studies-current GTA

Graduate Teaching Assistant Training

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Tip #1: Keep the Assignment in Mind

- You're not grading "writing." You're grading a specific writing assignment.
- Re-read the assignment or any directions your supervisor has given to the students. If you have questions about it, ask your supervisor.
- The assignment has a purpose – what is it? What does it ask students to do?

Tip #1 Keep the Assignment in Mind (Cont'd)

- The assignment's purpose will probably tie in with its genre.
- Which sample best fulfills this assignment?

Writing Assignment: In your blog post for this week, please respond to Chapter 15, "Tips for College Writing Success" by Nathan Timm. In your post, react to Timm and his ideas. You may choose to address one or all of the following questions. Minimum = 250 words.

- On what points do you agree with the author? Why?
- On what points do you feel tension with or question the author? Why?
- What points of the text are "muddy" to you, or confuse you? Why?
- How do you think this reading relates to our class? To your life? Why?
- What passages from the text resonate with you? Why?
- How can you relate to the text or to the author? Explain.

Other Examples of Genre

- Reader Response Letters
- Short answer
- Paragraphs
- Essays – short, long
- Summaries
- Journals/daybooks
- Literature Reviews
- Annotated Bibliographies
- Research Proposals
- Arguments
- _____?
- _____?

Genre (Cont'd)...

- Remind yourself what it's like to write in that genre in your discipline.
 - What purpose does the genre serve?
 - Who are the readers and the writers of that genre?
 - What are the “rules” of that genre?
 - Look for models of that genre.
 - How did you learn to write in that genre?

Tip #2: Know Your Students

- You're asking them to read, talk, and write like experts in your discipline –

How much practice do they have?
- What other writing have they done in college, and what types of writing do they do regularly?



Tip #3: Remember Your Role

- **You're the READER, not the WRITER.**
- **Your purpose in grading writing is to help students learn.**

Tip #4: Understand How Rubrics Work, or Develop Your Own Grade Scale



- Ask your supervisor for examples of student work that align with each level of the rubric.
- Understand key words in the rubric.
- Or, when you grade your first “stack,” see how your use of the rubric compares to a fellow TA’s use of it – or to your supervisor’s vision.

Tip #5: Build Your Writing Vocabulary

1. **For Understanding key words in the assignment and the rubric**
2. **For Providing Feedback to Students** (they will want to talk to you about their writing and their grades)
3. **For Talking With Your Supervisor**

...For Understanding Key Words in the Assignment and the Rubric

Look for Verbs:

- analyze
- summarize
- explain
- synthesize
- argue
- define
- evaluate
- interpret
- compare
- contrast
- critique
- describe
- discuss
- react
- respond
- illustrate
- outline
- justify
- prove
- list
- trace
- state
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

...For Providing Feedback

- Pay attention and mimic what you like.
- Find your own style.
- Specific feedback is almost always more helpful, but MORE ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER.
- Prioritize. You don't have to comment on everything. Think back to the purpose and genre of the assignment. What's most important?
- Look for trends. E.g. if you see 14 comma splices, only mark the first couple (but let the student know there were more and that it's up to him/her to identify & fix them).

...For Providing Feedback

Content	<p>“Can you say more about...?” “Say more about....”</p> <p>“Can you explain...?” “Please explain....” “Add more detail here....” “Are you repeating yourself here?” “Why include this...?” “More research on_____will help you elaborate.” “I was confused here.”</p>
Paragraphs	<p>“This paragraph is confusing.” “You need a stronger topic sentence here.” “Do all these supporting sentences relate back to the topic sentence?” “Can you write a more detailed concluding sentence?” “I missed your transition from this paragraph to that one.”</p>
Sentences	<p>“I notice a lot of run-ons.” “I notice a lot of fragments.” “I notice a lot of extra commas.” “Work on your subject-verb agreement.” “I see you’re using passive voice, but we use active voice in this type of writing.”</p>

...For Providing Feedback

Research	<p>“Please redo your citations in MLA format.” “Please see APA handout and redo.” “Work on introducing quotes before ‘dropping’ them in.” “Block quotes that are over 4 lines long.” “Refer to the researcher by his/her last name.” “Alphabetize your Works Cited page.” “I couldn’t locate your thesis statement.”</p>
Other Common Remarks	<p>“Work on developing more formal word choice and reducing colloquial language.” “Work on using the language of the course in your writing.” “Work on expanding with details, examples, and explanations.” “Please visit the Writing Resources Center for help with_____.”</p>

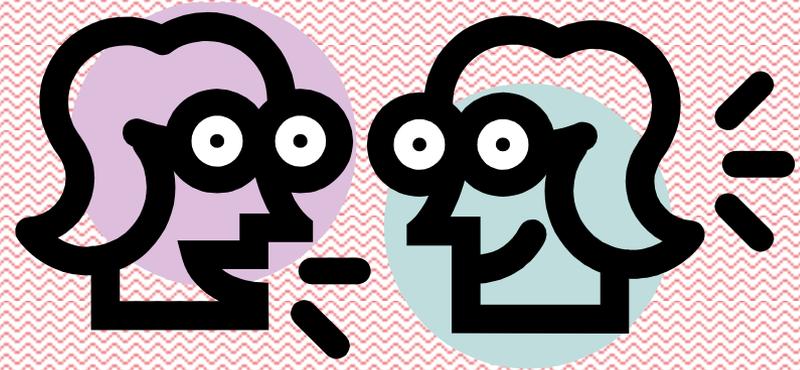
...For Providing Feedback

Problem	Symbol	Example
fragment	frag	After eating a rubber ball.
run-on sentence	RO	It's late we can't find a place to eat.
comma splice	CS	I went shopping, I bought shoes.
spelling	SP	I have too ears and you do two . Spell out numbers lower than 9 .
capitalization	≡	t he car was a t oyota.
lower case	/	Not every C ountry has a P resident.
new paragraph	¶	Start a new paragraph for new ideas/topics.
verb tense/form	VT, VF	Mike run all day yesterday.
wrong word choice	WC	A man that cries is still a man. (should be "who")
article usage	art	This an quarter, not the dime.
pronoun	pron	My family has their own party.
word form	WF	This is a danger situation.
sentence structure	SS	The bus they into got.
subject-verb agreement	SV	I is finished with my essay, but they has more to write.
word order, transpose	WO, 	I and Sandy had a great time. We don't time have .
insert text	^	A word ^ missing from this sentence.
close space	○	Every thing is one word.
delete		Take out the very extra word.
Missing punctuation	MP	Johns friend a freshman lost his dog

...For Talking With Your Supervisor

- Professor, should students write this in the first, second, or third person?
- Professor, who is the audience for this assignment?
- Professor, are you looking for more summary or more evaluation in this assignment?
- Professor, why do you prefer passive voice over active?
- Professor, I suspect plagiarism- What do you recommend?

When in doubt, ask.



Tip #6: Protect Your Time

- Know the expectations of your position and what you're being paid for.
- Manage your time.

Should you be grading for...

5 hours/week?

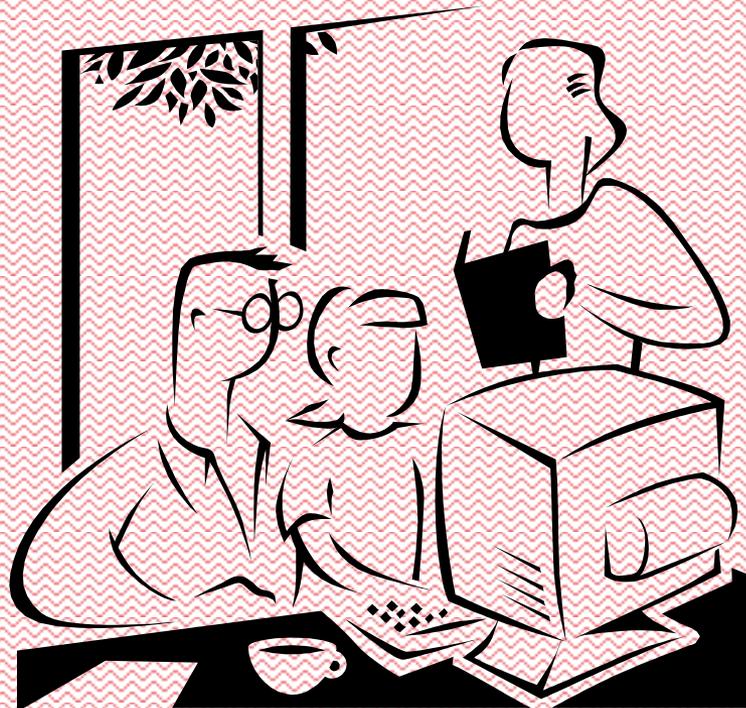
10 hours/week?

- Try setting a timer for each paper.



Tip #7: Be Confident

You may not know everything, but you know a lot more than your students do. You can be a huge help to them!



Works Consulted/Resources:

- University of Iowa CLAS website: [“Verbs in Writing Assignments”](#)
- SSR Incorporated’s website for editors, writers and designers: [“Handy Editing Symbols”](#)
- UNC Charlotte’s [Writing Resources Center](#)
- If you have further questions, please feel free to e-mail me at singram@uncc.edu.

Sample Writing Assignment #1

In this chapter, entitled “Tips for College Writing Success,” author Nathan Timm explains his strategies for writing well in college. First, he suggests setting “measurable goals.” He says to “keep them simple” and to “put them in writing” as to not forget them. Next, Timm says to “allow time” for your writing because “writing takes time.” He explains that he spends over half of his homework time on writing assignments; he has to “set appointments to write” so that he completes them all in a timely fashion. His third tip is to “have fun with it.” He says that even students who dislike writing can find something they like about it – even if that something is the end result, the “A” grade. Timm suggests “writing in your free time” to practice, and his fifth tip is to “write with music” because “the different moods in the music will change the pace and break up the mood in your writing.” Additionally, the author suggests an interesting “procrastination solution”: essentially, he says to “trick” yourself into thinking your assignment is due in one hour. He says, “You’ll discover what you can do when you have only moments to spare, and then find yourself a week ahead.” Next, he suggests working “with a partner” so that you can motivate each other. Lastly, Timm reminds us to “take breaks.” He suggests small breaks while you are writing, but also long breaks—a whole week, even—to re-energize yourself as a writer. Timm concludes his essay by urging students to try his techniques so that they will begin to enjoy writing assignments.

Sample Writing Assignment #2

Nathan Timm's best advice is #6, "A Procrastination Solution."

Procrastinating is my biggest problem with writing assignments, so if I could pretend that I only had an hour to complete an assignment, I might actually bite the bullet and get it done. For my senior project in high school, I waited until the last minute. My mom was so mad she made me stay at the public library all weekend. I thought there was NO way I could finish the whole project in that weekend, but I did. And I got a "B." So, I know that if I could make myself work hardcore for one hour like this reading says, I could get a lot more done. Some advice that I question is #5, "Write with Music." He says that "the different moods in the music will change the pace and break up the mood in your writing." In my experience, music is distracting because I start singing the lyrics and I'll write those in my paper! Maybe I could try writing to instrumental music. I also don't know about #7 because I feel like working with a friend would also distract me. But, I do like the idea of getting a friend to look over my writing for me because it's hard to catch my own mistakes.

I like how this author is a student. That helped me relate to what he was saying. I like how he admitted to not always loving writing. That made him more believable. I think he's a little crazy for writing in his free time, and I probably won't ever do that, but I can see how that is good advice for some people.