



The Second-Level Writing Handbook
A Guide for Instructors

*Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing
The Ohio State University
College of Humanities
485 Mendenhall Lab
125 South Oval Mall
Columbus, Ohio 43210
614.688.5865
<http://cstw.osu.edu>*

Preface

The Second-Level Writing Handbook is designed to support instructors in the implementation of GEC Second-Level Writing courses throughout the university. The handbook is intended to equip instructors to meet the writing and diversity requirements of a GEC course while addressing content matter pertinent to the discipline that offers the class.

The handbook is divided into sections that represent the major requirements of the GEC Curriculum and the Second-Level Writing Course, including:

- **Section 1:** A general **Introduction** to the second-level writing requirements
- **Section 2:** A practical approach to meeting the requirements of “**The American Experience**”
- **Section 3:** An overview of **Writing Process** pedagogy to guide instructor responses to student writing, the implementation of group writing workshops, and a guide to writing revision
- **Section 4:** An approach to teaching **Analysis and Critical Thinking**
- **Section 5:** A guide to provide students with instruction in **Speaking and Listening**
- **Section 6:** A guide to available writing **Technology** that can enhance a course curriculum
- **Section 7:** An informative section to aid instruction of **English as a Second Language (ESL)** students
- **Section 8:** A **Syllabus Checklist**.

This text represents the continuing work of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) staff at The Ohio State University Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing (CSTW). WAC scholarship and consultation can contribute to the educational success of instructors and students by using writing and writing instruction as a means of teaching course content in the context of a professional/academic discourse.

Therefore, CSTW’s Writing Across the Curriculum program provides many support services that are free and available to Ohio State University instructors. In addition to this handbook, individual consultations, group workshops, group and class presentations, classroom modeling, classroom observations, curriculum consultation services, and syllabi design support are available. Visit our web site at: <http://cstw.osu.edu/wac>.

Contributing Staff

Beverly J. Moss	Director, Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing
Nancy Hill McClary	Assistant Director, Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing
Michael J. Sasso	Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator (2004-2005)
Nancy Pine	Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator (2003-2004)
Chaya Chandrasekhar	Writing Across the Curriculum Consultant (2004-2005)
Dameion Wagner	Writing Across the Curriculum Consultant (2004-2005)
Elizabeth Marsch	Writing Across the Curriculum Consultant (2003-2005)
Jason Palmeri	Writing Across the Curriculum Consultant (2003-2004)
Akhila Ramnarayan	Writing Across the Curriculum Consultant (2003-2004)
Maren Hubbard	Writing Center Tutor (2004-2005)
Eve Rebennack	Writing Center Tutor (2004-2005)

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Preface	ii
Contributing Staff	iii
Section 1: Introduction to Second-Level GEC Writing Courses	1
Section 2: Diversity —“The American Experience”	3
“The American Experience”	3
Defining Diversity	3
Addressing Diversity Issues Within Course Content	4
Writing and Diversity	4
Course Goals and Diversity	4
How does diversity in the American experience connect to your course?	5
Who are your students?	6
How does “writing diversity” figure into your course?	6
Including the Study of Diversity in the Classroom	6
1. Assigning Writing that Reflects Diverse Perspectives	6
2. Interrogating Readings from Diverse Perspectives	7
Bibliography	8
Section 3: The Writing Process	9
Planning	9
Reading	9
Brainstorming	10
Generating a Controlling Purpose	12
Writing	12
Discourse/Genre	12
Audience(s)	13
Purpose	13
Evidence	14
Revising	15
Peer Group Workshops	16
Responding to Student Papers	18
1. Good Responding Strategies	18
2. Marginal vs. Terminal Comments	19
Frequently Asked Questions	21
How can I reduce time spent responding?	21

Table of Contents (continued)

	<i>Page</i>
How can I make my comments more effective?	22
Should I maintain an objective distance in my comment?	22
Should I try to guess what the writer really means?	22
Should I rewrite problematic sections of the text?.....	23
What do I do with a text full of grammar errors?	23
Do all comments have to be written?	24
Editing and Proofreading	24
Bibliography	24

Section 1

Introduction to the Second-Level GEC Writing Courses

The content of the second-level writing and related skills course focuses on “the American experience,” as it is envisioned by the academic disciplines of The Ohio State University departments that offer the course. For instance, Modern Greek 367 deals with issues in Greek-American society and culture, while Economics 367 addresses current economic issues, like class, education, and the distribution of wealth in the United States.

The Second-Level Writing Handbook informs instructors of the General Education Curriculum (GEC) guidelines for all 367 classes. It also familiarizes instructors with approaches to writing in their discipline that will meet GEC requirements.

The Ohio State University second level writing classes use writing and speaking as methods of learning course content and learning conventions of the professional and academic discourse of specific disciplines. Through reading and writing, second level writing courses acquaint students with the issues of diversity that influence and shape their discipline. Students are afforded the opportunity to enhance their communication skills by producing writing that engages course material within the social context of their discipline.

This handbook is organized according to the following GEC requirements of all Second-Level Writing and Related Skills courses. Each course must:

- Deal with some aspect of the “American experience”
- Focus on writing in which students employ/develop their abilities to analyze, synthesize, and use evidence
- Provide students with extensive writing instruction and experience
- Stress revision as a site of writing instruction as students revise their work after receiving instructor comments and/or peer feedback
- Enhance student reading, listening, and speaking skills by encouraging the analysis and synthesis of course material in oral form

Each section of *The Second-Level Writing Handbook* will address one of these course requirements. *The Second-Level Writing Handbook* considers composition to take many

forms in addition to the academic essay. Therefore, this handbook provides guides that facilitate many kinds of writing¹ including research papers, reports, position papers, critiques, letters, editorials, journal articles, digital media/multimedia, fiction and non-fiction.

¹ Kinds of writing often is discussed as the distinction between discourse and genre and the definitions of these terms are subjects of continuing academic debate. For the purposes of this handbook discourse will refer to the academic language and conventions associated with a particular discipline (for example, the discourse of biochemical engineers). Genre will refer to a particular convention of writing within the disciplinary discourse (for example, within the discourse of biochemical engineering are writing genres that include: lab reporting, government regulatory writing, and grant proposals).

Section 2

Diversity — “The American Experience”

The second-level writing course should engage students in a critical study of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States, with special attention to issues of race, ethnicity, disability, economic class, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and politics. In other words, the second-level writing course includes a study of the experience of diversity in the United States of America. Diversity might be best examined within the disciplinary content of your course.

“The American Experience”

All disciplines inform and influence the “American experience.” For example, the architecture of the Wexner Center influences the culture of Ohio State and communicates the values of the institution to the nation. Instructors should consider how their field of study contributes to the “American Experience.”

Studying the “American experience” in disciplinary contexts equips students to negotiate diversity in pluralistic societies. For example, Women’s Studies 367.02 interrogates the developing role of Latina women within the US in order to understand particular circumstances of American treatment of marginalized or minority groups.

Defining Diversity

A working definition of “diversity” can inform your teaching practices as well as your student’s basic knowledge of diversity and their own experiences with diversity issues. We usually consider diversity as things or people that deviate from a perceived majority or standard. But this simple definition is often problematic. For instance, if white men are always the standard from which every other person is compared then there is essentially no way to learn about differences among others or among white men. Also, studying diversity as a bipolar relationship of differences does not critically engage the dynamics of power, politics, culture or society at a meaningful level. Therefore, a study of diversity is not limited to a simple examination of difference.

Though it may seem that the terms “diversity” and “difference” have similar implications and commonalities, current scholarship has focused on their marked distinctions. While the study of diversity seeks to celebrate and affirm cultural differences, studying difference seeks to analyze and critique our emerging diverse American culture. In the classroom, studying diversity often encourages tolerance for marginalized groups. A critique of difference often leads students toward a more complex understanding of the dynamics of power in a plural society. Therefore, the best approaches to the study of diversity should include critical studies of difference.

Addressing Diversity Issues Within Course Content

The challenge for instructors of second-level writing courses is to understand and foreground how race, gender, sex, class, and sexuality, for example, shape society, politics, culture, and the development and history of their discipline. One of the major goals of the instructor should be to highlight the connection between diversity and writing in a particular discipline.

Writing and Diversity

A connection between diversity and writing can begin by considering these basic premises:

- Language and discourse is never outside of or apart from our understanding of experience.
- Language actually shapes how we experience, understand, and order reality.
- Language is inextricably connected to ideology and the articulation of identity.
- Writers “perform” social identities through writing.
- “Otherness” in language and discourse is evidence of institutional systems of domination and oppression.

It is important for instructors to have a clear awareness of what criteria contributes to good writing in their discipline. This understanding provides the framework for writing instruction and becomes the discursive medium where the information presented to students is processed, evaluated, and integrated into their overall understanding of diversity. However, good writing in any discipline does not necessarily indicate the presence of a good understanding of diversity or the dynamic relationship of the discipline with American society.

Each discourse (the academic language and conventions associated with a particular discipline) explains society, politics, and culture in various, distinct ways. For example, medical discourses tend to consider the disabled body as pathology, while disability studies discourses consider the disabled body as an alternative body that marks a particular social relationship. Consequently, the ideologies and conclusions of these two fields are the result of very different views of diversity. Therefore, a study of good writing practices can be approached as a study of how language shapes and influences attitudes toward diversity in a particular discipline.

Course Goals and Diversity

Reflecting upon what diversity means to you and your discipline may direct how you apply diversity to your course content and goals. The following heuristic can guide your investigation.

I want my second level writing course to help students...

- Acquire a more accurate or comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter by attending to alternative definitions and diverse perspectives related to content
- Learn and understand the history, traditions, and perspectives of specific groups that comprise the “American Experience” in relation to my course’s content
- Understand and value principles of diversity and equity in American society
- Develop and use skills and strategies to work actively toward a more democratic society
- Critically examine policies, structures, and methods of knowledge-making in my discipline in terms of power, equity, and access
- Use writing as a tool for inquiry and learning within my discipline
- Think in more complex ways about diversity and/or difference in relation to scholarship, methodologies, and epistemologies in my discipline
- Re-conceptualize the content of my discipline through a paradigm shift or through non-dominant perspectives
- Engage in class discussions and interactions which challenge biased views and include diverse perspectives in a climate of respect
- Develop and/or participate in writing projects that are action-oriented, socially-conscious, and/or community-involved
- Learn and practice writing strategies that will sponsor alternative thinking (rhetorical listening, rivaling of perspectives, etc.)

The following questions are designed to help you identify what you most want to accomplish in your class with respect to “writing and diversity” in the American Experience.

How does diversity in the American Experience connect to your course?

- What issues, controversies, conversations, and or debates regarding the American Experience are taken up in your discipline?
- What do you want students to know, do, and/or understand with respect to diversity and the American Experience in your discipline?

- What perspectives or attitudes do you want your students to take away about diversity in relation to your course content?

Who are your students?

- What sorts of backgrounds, attitudes, and understandings do students bring to your course regarding diversity and the American Experience?
- What issues do you face in helping students write and read diversity in your course?

How does “writing diversity” figure into your course?

- What forms of writing do students use in your course (note taking, journals, logs, lab reports, term projects, email correspondence, electronic postings, in-class assessments, memos to group members, minutes of group meetings, and multiple drafts of a paper)?
- How is this writing connected to helping students meet your course goals with respect to diversity in the American Experience?

Including the Study of Diversity in the Classroom

Among the possible approaches for incorporating diversity into a course, two common methods are:

1. Assigning Writing that Reflects Diverse Perspectives

Teaching diversity, though, does not simply have to be accomplished through readings and course content. Students can study and practice diverse ways of writing as well. You may want to consider with your students what kinds of writing your discipline privileges and which it excludes and why. Think about designing writing assignments that provide opportunities for multiple media, genres, and forms for creating disciplinary knowledge. In addition, instructors should be mindful of their assignment objectives. Below is a non-exhaustive list of possible diversity-related goals for writing assignments.

For this project/activity, I ask students for writing that...

___ synthesizes multiple perspectives about a diversity issue

___ displays understanding of course content

___ analyzes and evaluates published texts

___ addresses different audiences

- ___ summarizes secondary sources on a particular issue
- ___ narrates or describes their experiences with diversity
- ___ reflects upon their engagement with course content
- ___ analyzes or interprets class dynamics
- ___ imitates disciplinary forms (essay, abstract, lab report)
- ___ gauges student understanding anonymously
- ___ examines “gaps” or “silences” in published research
- ___ is collaboratively authored to represent group understanding
- ___ summarizes research on an issue/group
- ___ helps students examine diverse perspectives & assumptions
- ___ poses a problem, outlining various concerns/constituencies
- ___ articulates solutions to a problem
- ___ applies data to a sample problem or case study
- ___ interprets findings in a disciplinary context.

2. Interrogating Readings from Diverse Perspectives

The following list contains ideas and activities that help to facilitate the interrogation of course content from diverse perspectives.

- Read and discuss an article that directly explores the implications of race. Remember that minority race characteristics exist in concert with the characteristics associated with dominant races. Studying dominant race privileges, Caucasian privileges for example, is as important to the understanding of race as understanding masculinity is to the study of feminism.
- Have students draw the author of a particular text the class is reading. Collaboratively discuss students’ choices for how their drawing interprets the text.
- Hold a “town meeting” in class in which students role-play positions of differing stakeholders on a particular issue.

- Create assignments in which students must shift their point of view, writing through another's voice. Have students draw on multiple academic and nonacademic writing styles and genres for a single assignment or discussion.
- Lead in-class informal writing or discussion that does not require the student to write or speak in "Standard English" or "Academic Discourse." Compare differences.

The examples given in this section of the handbook are not exhaustive, but are intended to get instructors started on locating diversity issues within their particular discipline. You may also want to consult with The Ohio State University Multicultural Center located at <http://multiculturalcenter.osu.edu> when deciding how to meet the diversity requirements of the second level writing course.

Bibliography

Benson, C., & Christian S. (2002). *Writing to make a difference: Classroom projects for community change*. Columbia, NY: Teachers College.

Bruffee, K. (1986). Social construction, language, and the authority of knowledge: A bibliographical essay. *College English* 48, 773-790.

Flower, L. (2000). *Learning to rival: A literate practice for intercultural inquiry*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Moss, B. & Walters, K. (1993). Rethinking diversity: Axes of difference in the writing classroom. In L. Odell (Ed.), *Theory and practice in the teaching of writing: Rethinking the discipline*. (pp. 132-185). Carbondale: Southern Illinois P.

Ratcliffe, K. (2000). Eavesdropping as rhetorical tactic: History, whiteness, and rhetoric. *JAC* 20, 87-119. Romano, T. (2000) *Blending genre, altering style: Writing multigenre papers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook; Heinemann.

Section 3

The Writing Process

Students learn to write by encountering the different writing decisions necessary to compose their texts. Deciding what to write, how to articulate ideas, and where to place those ideas in relationship to the purpose and audience of the writing are decisions that writers make at every level of the writing process. An understanding of writing processes may help writing instructors and writers to productively and intelligently discuss good writing practices. This handbook divides the writing process into four stages:

- Planning
- Writing
- Revising
- Editing/Proofreading

Within these stages, writers make decisions regarding purpose, arrangement, appropriate and available arguments, style, and type of delivery (e.g. plain text, text and illustrations, text and images, or other digital media). Although these steps are ordered consecutively in this section of the handbook, the corresponding decisions are not chronologically experienced by every writer. Rather, they are recursively encountered throughout the writing process.

Planning

Reading

Preparing to write academic papers begins with critical reading. Students need to be reminded that even though some of the material they read can be persuasive, they should not fall under the spell of the printed word as authority. Authors of every text have an agenda, something that they want a reader to believe. As students get used to reading critically, they learn to recognize authors' agendas, and they can use this skill to improve their own ability to write and analyze.

Ask students to take notes either in the margins or on a separate sheet as they read. Inform them that simply highlighting a text with a highlighter is only good for memorizing a text—it does not encourage critical reading. Part of the goal is for students to be able to put the author's ideas in their own words. Students can then stop thinking of the ideas they read about as facts and start thinking of them as arguments.

When students read, they can ask themselves questions like:

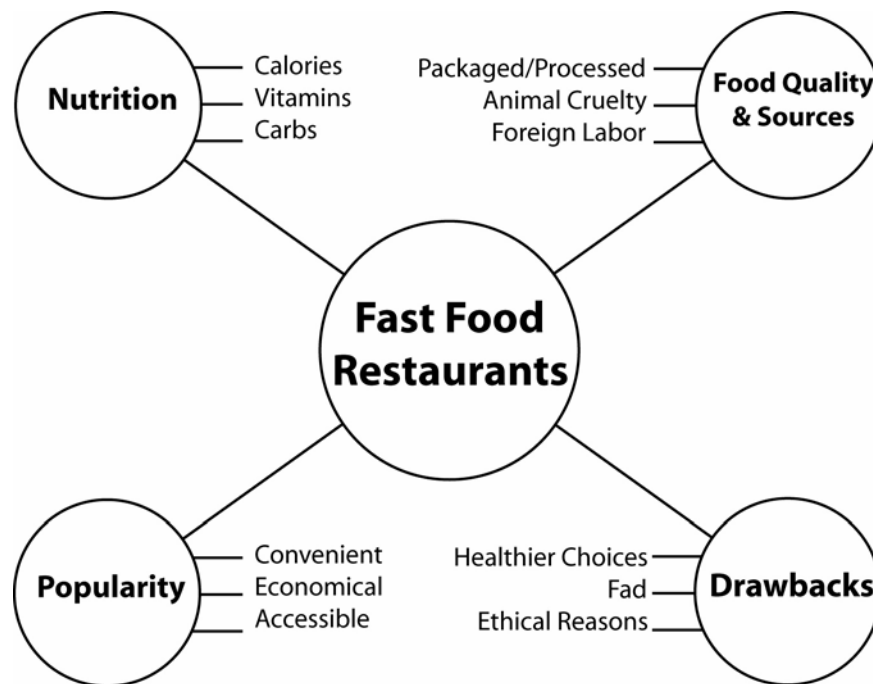
- What is the author trying to prove?

- What does the author assume about the reader's beliefs?
- Do you as the reader agree with the author?
- Does the author adequately defend his/her argument?
- What kind of proof does he/she use?
- Is there something the author leaves out that you would put in? Does putting it in hurt or help the author's argument?
- Who is the author's intended audience?

Brainstorming

Developing a focus for writing, and organizing a piece of writing, is an important step in the planning stage of the writing process. There are a number of brainstorming techniques that can help students decide on what to write, help them to organize their arguments, and guide their planning process. Remember, it is important to provide brainstorming techniques that address the diverse learning styles and experiences of students. Some of the more popular brainstorming activities include:

- **Webbing** - Writers begin by recording an idea on paper, a marking board, diagram, flow chart, or sticky notes. Then, associated ideas are recorded in relationship to that idea (see diagram below). The ideas can be manually arranged in groups and the groups spatially arranged in a representation of the proposed final product. Also, building blocks, tinker toys, or Legos may be used to spatially arrange a writer's work. This method works well for individual writers or groups of writers.



- Free writing - Free writing requires students to simply write without regard to grammar, mechanics, or consistency. The product is then examined by the writer to gather and arrange ideas for the writing project.
- Listing - Listing requires a writer, or a group of writers, to quickly generate words/phrases associated with their intended topic. The list can then be used to develop concepts and arguments and later arranged in an order of presentation for the final work.
- Drawing - Some writers are energized by a visual representation of their topic or argument. Writers can draw an illustration of their argument and position the elements of the drawing in a way that will guide the writing of the piece. Some students respond well to drawing pictures or designing banners that demonstrate their purpose to an audience.
- Outlining - The outline may be the most familiar form of brainstorming activity. Students arrange their ideas in lists that are later expressed in full sentences/concepts.
- Discussion - Discussion requires writers to talk about their topic and arguments with a potential audience that adds to and challenges the information. This process offers the writer three principle benefits. First, it gives the writer a chance to orally express his or her ideas in a way that “feels more natural,” respects the individual voice, and is free from the encumbrances of writing conventions. Second, the writer gets to receive immediate feedback that aids in the focusing and development of an argument. And third, this system of brainstorming gives a writer the most distinct sense of audience. Writers see and hear an interpretation of his/her message and are able to dialogically adjust the form of the message’s expression to fulfill their purpose for writing.
- Story boards - Storyboards are used by film makers to separate the work of each scene of their production. A storyboard may appear similar to a comic book frame that includes information about that portion of a multimedia or other kind of text. Frames include visual diagrams, illustrations, written text, video clips, voice over scripts, sound choices, cues, or any other factor encountered or required. Each frame can then be arranged and presented in a way that suits a writer’s purpose and audience. The storyboard may be the generator of any kind or combination of communication forms from words on paper to film.
- Drama - Dramatically representing a concept or argument can inspire some writers to develop their work. For example, nanotech structures can be represented by different students and their behavior demonstrated in the classroom. The drama can then be recorded, arranged, and developed in a way that suits the author’s purpose and mode. This method can generate Flash segments, progressive drawings, illustrations, dialog, and other forms of text.

Each of these activities can be revisited throughout the writing process as necessary to shape ideas. It is best not to emphasize mechanical and grammatical issues at this stage of the writing process.

Generating a Controlling Purpose

At this stage of the writing process, a student pinpoints what topics and issues interest him or her and determine the focus or controlling purpose of the work. A controlling purpose may be a persuasive point, an analysis, a research report, a description, or any other cogent representation of information dictated by the context of a writing assignment. Students need to be reminded that without a controlling purpose their work will merely be an “information dump.” Generating and fulfilling a purpose can guide successful writing.

Students can begin to generate the controlling purpose of a paper by asking questions of the topic (alone or with another person). When reading about this topic, they can write down authors’ concerns, questions, and key arguments. Is there anything that they, as readers, disagree/agree with? Students can write a list of things they know in addition to the text’s coverage of a topic. Based on the information they have gathered and considered, students can then ask themselves the question, “What is the point I am trying to make?” Subsequently, they need to consider whether the ideas they intend to present are worth reading about and in what ways their observations or analyses can contribute to a larger discussion.

Writing

Discourse/Genre²

In most cases, when students write, they enter a conversation that was already in progress. That conversation may be among engineering journal article writers and editors, lab researchers, literature scholars, women’s studies students, or football fans. When instructors give a writing assignment they always invite students to enter a conversation that has communicative expectations and a community that has already agreed on its form and content, i.e. discourse genre. Within the classroom, invitations to join this conversation begin with writing assignments or prompts. Berkenkotter and Huckin argue that “Genres are the media through which scholars and scientists communicate with their peers. Genres are intimately linked to a discipline’s methodology, and they package information in ways that conform to a discipline’s norms, values, and ideology (1).” The decisions a student makes in the process of

² The distinction between discourse and genre and the definitions of these terms are subjects of continuing academic debate. For the purposes of this handbook discourse will refer to the academic language and conventions associated with a particular discipline (for example, the discourse of biochemical engineers). Genre will refer to a particular convention of writing within the disciplinary discourse (for example, within the discourse of biochemical engineering are writing genres that include: lab reporting, government regulatory writing, and grant proposals).

writing are always shaped by the student's ability to critically conceive the form and content of a disciplinary community. Often, a student's ability to write proficiently, or a professional academic's ability to write successfully, is dynamically related to their ability to intelligently "speak the language" of a community of interlocutors.

Audience(s)

Students should always be aware that the audience, or the reader(s) of a piece of writing, pervasively influences the production of a writing assignment. They need to be reminded that writing frequently addresses audiences that may range from experts in the field with specialized knowledge of the subject being discussed to novices. Often a piece of writing simultaneously addresses multiple audiences. For example, a lab report can be delivered to a primary audience of development engineers and have a secondary audience of executives that will apply the findings to production. Understanding multiple audiences can help a student to expand the possible choices he or she makes in the writing process.

At first, students will tend to think of the instructor—the person who assigns the writing task and who will evaluate the writing—as the sole audience of their work. To avoid students from falling into this trap and to get them to anticipate audiences beyond the immediate classroom, instructors can determine the target audience as part of the assignment. For example, instructors can ask students to imagine the audience for a particular piece of writing to be fellow students, a specific demographic of society (for example, teenage Chicana girls), a specific professional group (for example, CEOs of multinational corporations), or an educated but uninitiated relative (for example, the student's grandfather). Acknowledging diverse audience backgrounds—education, race, gender, profession, nationality, (dis)ability, or the author's relationship to the reader (father, citizen etc.)—will urge students to consider how much the reader may know about a topic and what views/opinions the reader may hold about that topic. An awareness of audience helps to make critical writing decisions about tone, word choice, organization, credible points of argument, appropriate level of detail and jargon, and the style of the writing.

Purpose

The purpose of a writing project should be clearly determined by every student writer. Writing is intended to do some kind of work for example, to convince a reader, to report findings, to entice customers to purchase a product, or to demonstrate mastery of a particular subject. Help students to remember the purpose of their work as they write. Some instructors find it useful to have students answer the question, "What purpose will this portion of my project fulfill?"

Purpose pervades every writing decision. For example, the overall purpose of a biology lab report may be to introduce a new discovery in genetics. Smaller parts of the report serve this purpose by providing background research information to bring readers up to date with the work that the lab report is based upon, or by detailing procedure in a way that eliminates reader skepticism and verifies the results so the new discovery will find a place in future research efforts.

Within each part of a piece of writing more specific choices are made regarding the kind of arrangement, or organization, that would best serve the purpose of the writer – even word choices and sentence structure decisions can be influenced by an examination of their intended purpose. For example, a writer’s overall purpose is to convince executives that a newly discovered lubricant, Purposaline, is the answer to assembly line breakdowns. This purpose can pervasively guide writing decisions at many levels. It would cause the writer to arrange arguments in a way that would most effectively convince an executive audience³ – perhaps leading to a decision to put the cost efficiency of preventing breakdowns at the beginning of the piece and ending with the technical information about the product. When presenting the technical portion of the argument, at the sentence level, the writer might decide to use more descriptive sentences that fit the technical expertise of the executives. At the word choice level, the writer’s purpose might dictate a decision to phrase evidence as “saved production time” rather than “lost production time.” Or, to use the word “Proposaline” rather than its compound name Proethylpolybuteratemetethylsalinate.

Evidence

The ways in which research is conducted differs from discipline to discipline. Researchers in different fields may approach any given subject from vastly different perspectives and ask critically distinct questions. For example, if the Statue of Liberty is the subject of study, humanists—for example an historian—may conduct research from the view point of the event at which the gift from France to the U.S. was conceived in 1865. The historian may question how this event relates to other similar events. What were the reactions of the French people to the gift? What is the significance of the event to two nations that uphold freedom and democracy as ideals? On the other hand, an English major may analyze the poem “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus, located on the base of the Statue of Liberty. The student may ask what inspired Lazarus to compose the verses. Did the poet’s background as a member of a prominent New York Jewish family affect the prose? What role has the poem’s famous culminating lines: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free...” played in formulating notions of American identity? Another field within the Humanities, perhaps Women’s Studies, may regard the significance of personifying the concept of liberty as female and may question what it means for a monument that celebrates freedom to be represented as a Caucasian woman?

A structural engineer researching the monument may be less interested in issues of human experience and instead might consider the structural matters regarding the construction of the colossal copper sculpture. How is the statue’s outer copper covering designed to move independently, while still standing upright? At what wind speed does the statue sway? At what speed does the wind affect the sway of the torch, borne in the upraised hand, as opposed to the rest of the body?

³ Note the pervasive influence of purpose, audience, argument, arrangement, style, discourse and genre upon each writing decision. This section foregrounds purpose, yet many writing decisions are made with other influences in the forefront.

A person in the arts studying the Statue of Liberty may adopt a different approach than the humanists and engineers and raise a set of entirely different questions: Did the sculptor, Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, base the sculpture on an actual model? What sculptural technique did he employ? Did the sculptor's visit to Egypt affect the otherwise largely neoclassical style of the sculpture? Does Bartholdi's oeuvre consist of other grand public monuments? What do the attire, adornments, and objects held in the hands of the figure symbolically signify?

In addition to raising different questions, each discipline also adopts specific ways in which it attempts to find answers to its queries and convince people of the conclusions it draws. Readers are convinced of an argument's veracity by evidence, or proofs. Just as the questions raised about any given topic vary from field to field, evidence is also discipline specific. For example, a political scientist might consider the original copy of a historical treaty as solid evidence, while a biologist may rely on empirical data based on laboratory work.

As instructors of the second-level writing course, it may be useful to consider the following questions:

- What types of questions does your field ask and what constitutes acceptable evidence in your discipline?
- Does your discipline expect quantitative evidence or qualitative evidence, or both?
- Does your discipline privilege inductive reasoning or deductive reasoning?
- Does deductive reasoning work in the same way as inductive reasoning in your field?
- What does your discipline accept as primary sources and what constitutes secondary sources?

Consider and discuss with your students how the types of questions your discipline asks and the types of evidence it expects guide research and writing within the field of study.

Revising

Revision is the most productive learning practice in the writing process. It involves making changes in focus, content, organization, and style to better match the audience and purpose of the assignment. Often students will think of revising as editing and proofreading. They need to be reminded that revision is a time to re-vision the paper. That is, it is a stage in which to discover the things that work well and things that can be improved in their writing. During revision, students can identify, understand, and resolve common writing inconsistencies, including drifting purposes, indistinct points of argument, inadequate evidence, changes in tone, ineffective organization, and convoluted sentences. Since revision occurs before the final product is delivered, it is a safe place for students to learn and an essential place for instructors encouraging students to improve their writing ability.

Instructors can provide students with a set of questions to guide revision. Kitty O. Locker suggests dividing revising into three sections: 1) content and clarity 2) organization and layout, and 3) style and tone (117-18). The following questions are adapted from Locker's checklist for thorough revision (118):

- Content and Clarity
 - Is the purpose for writing clear and complete?
 - Does the document meet the needs of the reader or audience?
 - Is the reader provided with all the information that is necessary for understanding what is written?
 - Is the information presented accurate?
 - Are there any contradictions that obscure the intended meaning and purpose of the document?
 - Is the logic clear and convincing? Are generalizations backed up with adequate supporting materials?
- Organization and Layout
 - Is the organization appropriate for the intended purpose and audience?
 - Are important points emphasized clearly?
 - Does the writer smoothly transition from idea to idea?
 - Are the first and last paragraphs effective?
 - Does the layout or design of the document allow the reader to find the necessary information easily?
 - Is the layout clear, orderly, and reader-friendly?
- Style and Tone
 - Is the text easy to read?
 - Is the text free from sexist, racist, or other forms of insensitive or offensive language that might alienate readers?

Peer Group Workshops

Conducting peer group workshops is a productive revision method. Writers have the opportunity to hear feedback from their peers and make changes according to the way their work is received by this group. Peer revision provides students the opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their writing and help improve the final product. Responding to their peers' writing also helps students to become better readers and critics of their own work.

All second-level writing instructors are encouraged to form peer revision groups. Groups of three to five writers are best because they tend to encourage more discussion and produce more feedback than groups of two. Smaller groups tend to produce unmediated consensus rather than productive discussions on writing decisions.

Productive peer writing workshop groups require good time and task management and involve orchestration on the part of the instructor. Students need to be advised and trained for the tasks they will be expected to accomplish. The best way to begin training

students to respond effectively to one another's writing is to model the process with the class, using sample student papers.

One method of response you might consider to guide students through the peer writing workshops is the three-column response. This method insures that the peer conference does not turn into a trading of papers, a quick read, and evaluative comments that go no farther than "good" or "no problems." The structured format of this method holds all members of the response group accountable to insightful feedback. The three-column response group may be directed as follows:

- a. Students are divided into small groups (about four members to a group).
- b. A member of the group will begin by reading his or her paper. This person will be the facilitator of the conference and can provide blank sheets of paper or three-column forms for the responders to use. The three-column form may look something like this:

Name _____ Title _____		
FREEWRITE:		
Positive	Concerns	Questions

- c. The reader reads his or her paper while the others only listen (pencils down). When the reader finishes reading he or she requests the others to begin a freewrite. The reader keeps time for two minutes, while the group members write about what they have just heard.
- d. At the end of the two minutes, the reader reads the paper again. This time the response group takes notes in three columns on their forms or on the blank sheets of paper. In the "Positive" column the responder records anything that he or she likes about the paper or sees as a strong point. The responder records any areas of weakness or confusion in the "Concerns" column. The "Questions" column is reserved primarily for questions that will prompt clarity or further development. Ask the responders to include

reasons whenever possible to make the comments clearer. The reader may want to read the paper out aloud another time if the responders need it.

e. When the column responding is done, the reader facilitates sharing by calling on the first person to share the information from his or her three columns. While the information is read by the responder, the reader may take notes or make marks on his or her paper, but should not respond verbally except to ask for simple clarification. After the first responder is through commenting, the reader calls on the next group member to share his or her observations.

f. When all responders have shared their comments, the writer may ask for additional clarifications. The writer may also brainstorm possible ways to revise the paper for the next draft. It is important to let writers be aware that they do not have to incorporate all of the feedback received, if they do not feel it will help improve the paper.

Although the three-column system may seem very structured and lacking in free exchange, it provides direction for students who frequently do not know what they are supposed to do in a peer response group. In the three-column method, the expectations are clearly defined. The conversation is directed to maintain the focus on the task at hand. The freedom to discuss more elaborately comes after the “focus work” is completed. In addition, writers have access to notes regarding their peers’ suggestions.

Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff in their *Sharing and Responding* provide a number of additional models of response that instructors can use to conduct guided peer writing workshops (63-8). Choose the approach that best fits your teaching philosophy and writing assignment. Writing Across the Curriculum consultants will gladly work with you in the development and implementation of peer revision workshops.

Responding to Student Papers

In addition to peer writing workshop feedback, instructor feedback is indispensable during the revision process. Instructor feedback helps a student to benefit from the well-trained eye of a professional writing instructor. Instructor comments are often carefully considered by students and can create a dialog about writing with a student. Please consider the following guidelines for responding to student papers in an efficient and effective manner.

1. Good Responding Strategies

Constructive comments aim at helping the writer not only to understand his/her problems with the specific text in question, but also to develop a critical approach and strategy that can be used in future writing situations.

Talk about "the essay" not the student: When explaining problems in the text, avoid using "you," since "you don't explain well enough" can be read as a personal attack, whereas "the text doesn't explain well enough" locates the problem in the text.

Ensure your comments reflect your priorities: Respond with the assignment's primary goals in mind, using a hierarchy of priorities for responding to various elements. If 80% of your comments are about grammar, the message this may send is that grammar matters more than other elements. Yet, if all the changes you can suggest to your student are grammatical changes, it may indicate that the paper has been successfully planned, written and revised. Only editing will be necessary to produce a good final product

Advise future action: Comments should also provide guidance for future revision or learning, even if it's a final draft. In your terminal comments, you may wish to give students a list of a few things to revise or pay attention to next time, in priority order. Instead of just telling them what to *avoid* doing in the future, concentrate on finding *positive verbs* that describe the actions they should take (organize, look up, create transitions, introduce, explain, remember, include).

Positive comments: It is important to praise the text for what is done well. When revising, a student who has received no positive comments is unlikely to know what is worth keeping in the draft. He or she may actually spend time revising sections of the text that were executed well; praise is especially important when the text needs major revisions in other areas.

Explain good elements. Positive comments also function to support the student in his or her learning, and reinforce good writing strategies. Give detailed explanations of your student's good practices. Often a student has internalized a successful writing strategy and doesn't realize that it should be maintained in future writing. In addition, positive comments help to deracinate a student's enmity with their writing and to develop self-confidence in their writing abilities.

2. Marginal vs. Terminal Comments

Marginal comments refer to those you write either in the margins or directly in the text of a student's paper, whereas terminal comments refer to the usually more lengthy comment at the end of the assignment or on a separate page. Marginal comments are more suited for feedback on specific sections of the text. Terminal comments are usually saved for more global concerns affecting the whole writing assignment. It is important to provide a writer with both types of comments because their physical positioning allows you to provide different types of feedback.

Marginal comments

Responding as a Reader - You experience the reading as a person, not necessarily as a teacher. In other words, your primary concern is reading, not evaluating.

Examples:

- 1."Wow! You do a great job of explaining hybridization in terms your audience will understand."
- 2."I get a little lost right now. How does this relate to what you just said about pesticide usage?"
- 3."Here you seem to think it's important for the firm to invest in expansion and remodeling instead of securities. Why?"

- **Asking Questions** - the most effective comments to help students revise and develop a critical sense of their own work are comments worded as questions. Questions can refer to content, organization, or even grammar and word choice.

Examples:

- 1."The paper talks about rural societies on the last page and brings them up again here. Is there a reason for organizing it this way? If so, it might be better to make it more explicit for the reader."
- 2."Why? Does this address the factors you discussed previously on page 2?"
- 3."How do you think this youth development program should be implemented? Who would oversee it?"
- 4."What specifically do you mean by 'digestive difficulty'?"

- **Noting Patterns** - Although our first tendency as graders is to mark every error we see, this practice can be overwhelming for the writer. It is more helpful to note patterns in organization, or grammar and punctuation mistakes. It is usually best to explain an error the first time it occurs and merely to note its recurrence throughout the paper. Obviously, you can't do this for every error. Note the one(s) that seems to intrude most on your ability to read the paper smoothly.

Examples:

- 1."Here 'were,' not 'was,' is the correct form because your subject, 'products,' is plural. Look for other times where I've underlined your verbs."
- 2."Here there are two sentences joined by 'however.' When this occurs, you need a semicolon before the however and a comma after it. Look for other instances where you have two sentences joined this way. I didn't mark them all."

Terminal Comments

Characteristics of good terminal comments include the following:

- **Positive Comments** - Tell the student what you like about the paper first.
- **Priorities** - Do not try to comment on every problem. Limit your criticisms to a few key concerns so that students aren't overwhelmed.

- **Specific Suggestions** - Offer suggestions on how the student can address the concerns mentioned above.
- **Notation of Patterns** - Note patterns here if you have not already done so in the margins.
- **Suggestions about Resources** - Point out resources the student can refer to and/or invite him/her to come and see you if possible. Resources might include The Writing Center, peers, you, a grammar handbook, or a content-specific reference.

Example:

Janis, I can really see and appreciate your compassion for the plight of the small farmer in Preble County. The article's tone conveys this well. However, the article doesn't seem to analyze the reasons why large farms are becoming more and more prevalent: what national and local factors have influenced this trend? Has there been any individual or collective resistance to this decline? Probing some of these complexities in order to contextualize the local situation would have created a much stronger article. For the next assignment, you might try a variety of invention techniques in order to consider your topic from several different angles. If you need help along the way, please come see me or have one of your classmates read and respond to a draft. Good first effort!

Realizing Student Potential

There is no formula for the most successful types of comments, thus each teacher needs to articulate a conscious rationale and philosophy for commenting in the way he or she does. In other words, many different types of comments can work as long as you understand why you comment in the way you do and how you believe these comments will help students in the future. Also, teaching individuals to locate and increase their potential writing ability is a singularly human event that requires writing instruction skills combined with the ability to build a productive relationship between the student/writer and their writing.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I reduce time spent responding?

- Before you begin, consider the assignment's instructional goals and develop a hierarchy of elements that you will respond to. Concentrate on only the top three prioritized elements as you respond.
- Read through all the papers before writing anything on them. You can discuss the most common serious problems with the whole class instead of writing the same extensive comment on 10 papers.
- Write your marginal comments first. Tracing your reactions in the marginal comments will help you write a terminal comment.
- Consider meeting personally in a conference with individual students whose papers require complicated or extended responses. It takes less time to talk than write, and there is less chance of the student misunderstanding you.

- Try implementing peer response on the students' first drafts. By the final draft, they will be of better quality and easier to read and respond to.

How can I make my comments more effective?

- Make sure the types of comments reflect the goals of the assignment.
- Use both marginal and terminal comments to give specific and general feedback.
- Limit the number of your marginal comments per page so that you don't overwhelm the student.
- Balance praise with questions and advice.
- Advise positive actions to take when writing, not just what to avoid.
- Explain what is done well; don't give vague praise.
- Identify error patterns instead of marking every error.
- Write about problems in "the essay," not the student: be careful with the word "you".
- Red ink can seem "angry"; try other colors. Use a pencil for marginal comments so you can revise or erase.
- Discuss your responding strategies with your students, and make your instructional goals and responding criteria clear in the assignment.

Should I maintain an objective distance in my comments?

Yes and no. While you certainly need to omit personally derogatory comments or purely negative reactions, it is very valuable to let a student see the reactions of a real reader. Because you experience reading a student text as a reader first and a teacher (or evaluator) second, let the student see both reactions. Below are some comments that show the teacher is an honest and interested reader:

- Wow! I really like the narrative example in this part. I can almost see it.
- I get a little lost right now. How does this relate to what you just said about the texture in this painting?
- Here you seem to think it's better for the firm to invest in expansion and remodeling instead of securities. Why?

Should I try to guess what the writer really means?

Yes and no. A good reader will try to intuit or interpolate meaning based on what is stated; however, it is dangerous to assume you know what is going on in the writer's head based on a vague or ambiguous passage. Even if you personally understand a writer's hint, will most of the intended audience have the background knowledge and skill to guess the implied meaning? If the target audience includes international students who recognize English as a foreign language, would they be able to understand?

If you perceive two or more options for interpretation, this is ambiguity, and it may be useful to explain the possibilities to the student.

For example:

- I'm not sure where you're going here. You could make a conclusion about the effect of the inversion layer from your data that has serious consequences, or you could call this same data into question.
- I can't tell from what's here which message you want me, as a reader, to get. Can you try making its significance more explicit?

Should I rewrite problematic sections of the text?

No. The most successful comments to help students revise and develop their own critical sense are comments worded as questions or suggestions. Questions can refer to content, organization, or even grammar and word choice.

For example:

- This word has a negative connotation that distracts the reader. Perhaps look in a thesaurus for a different word.
- The paper talks about texture on the last page and brings it up again here. Is there a reason for organizing it this way? Can you show the reader how this relates to the previous section?
- How do you think this youth development program should be implemented? Who would oversee it?
- What specifically do you mean by "this is a problem"?

What do I do with a text full of grammar errors? (*comma splices, articles, tenses*)

- Usually avoid proofreading or fixing. Composition studies by authors like David Bartholomae, Mina P. Shaughnessy, and Mike Rose to name a few have shown that students do not necessarily learn from this approach. They are less likely to process the reason behind each error and the changes you made. Some instructors don't mind the effort of editing, so if it is the final draft, editing a single paragraph might be a good idea to show the student how much attention is needed to sentence-level errors.
- Note patterns. It is more helpful to note error patterns in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. It is usually best to explain an error the first time it occurs and merely to note its recurrence throughout the paper. Obviously, you can't do this for every error. Note the one(s) that affect your ability to read the paper smoothly and are repeated frequently.
- Do you feel you lack grammar knowledge and terminology? It could be useful to underline a passage where something does not sound right, and ask the student to read the sentence aloud to find the error. This strategy will only work if the writer is a native speaker of English. Another way is to put an X in the margin next to lines that contain errors: in many cases the student can figure out the problem.
- Some multilingual writers have specific problems with grammar. For instance, some Asian languages do not use "a/an/the." Omitting articles or other similar grammatical discrepancies does not indicate poor writing. Multilingual writers may

benefit from the strategy of "noting patterns." For more information on teaching multilingual students see Section 7 (ESL Students in Second-Level Writing) of this handbook.

Do all comments have to be written?

No, you can also deal with them orally in class or in a conference with the individual student. Also, if the class has electronic communication, you can instruct using that medium.

- In-class: If many of your students have the same kind of problem in their essays, discuss it in class instead of repeating the same comment on each paper. You may still wish to "mark" the problem so the student can find an example in his or her own writing.
- Conferences: Any comment that can be written down can just as effectively be incorporated into a one-to-one conference with a student. In fact, conferences, because of their interactive nature, are frequently a more efficient and personable way to help a student take control over his or her own text.

Editing and Proofreading

After writing and revision is complete the writer can then work on editing sentence level changes, mechanical/grammar, spelling, diction, and accuracy of citations, format, and other surface errors. This step has traditionally been called proofreading. Editing is an important part of the process that is often aided by the use of a style and grammar handbook. Separating the work of editing from the process of revision is an important distinction for writers to understand because a piece of writing's affect is most directly determined by the large, meaning making decisions encountered in revision.

Bibliography

Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *When a Writer Can't Write: Studies in Writer's Block and other Composing Problems*. Ed. Mike Rose. New York: Guilford, 1985. 134-65.

Berkenkotter, Carol and Thomas N. Huckin. *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication: Cognition/Culture/Power*. Hove, U.K. and Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Earlbaum, 1995.

Collins, James L. "Basic Writing and the Process Paradigm." *Journal of Basic Writing* 14.2 (1995): 3-18

Elbow, Peter and Pat Belanoff, *Sharing and Responding*. New York: Random House, 1989.

Locker, Kitty O. *Business and Administrative Communication*. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Rico, Gabrielle. "General Principles of Clustering." *Writing the Natural Way*. Boston: Houghton, 1983. 35-39.

Robinson, William S. "On Teaching Organization: Patterns, Process, and the Nature of Writing." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 21 (1994):191-98.

Rose, Mike. "Narrowing the Mind: Cognitive Reductionism and Remedial Writers." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1997.

Rose, Mike, *Lives on the Boundary: The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared*. New York: Penguin, 1989.

Shaughnessy, Mina P. *Introduction. Errors and Expectations: A Guide for Teachers of Basic Writing*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. 1-13.

Sommers, Nancy. "Revision Strategies of Student Writers." *College Composition and Communication* 31 (1980):378-88.

Wiener, Harvey. "Basic Writing: First Day's Thoughts on Process and Detail." *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*. Ed. Timothy R. Donnavan and Ben W. McCelland. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1980. 87-99.