Most articles presume effective feedback should be timely, legible, and focused on guidance or motivation, not grade justification or copyediting. The following principles and strategies are repeated in the research:

1. **Clarify assignment, grading expectations and standards.**
   - Explain the purpose, task and criteria for the assignment.
   - Specify expectations or rubric beforehand.
   - Grade student work according to the assignment goals & set standards rather than invisible factors.

2. **P**rioritize your feedback to make it manageable for everyone**.
   - Set a rough time limit (e.g., 15-20 minutes for a 4-5 page essay) for reading and responding and stick to it.
   - More feedback does not necessarily mean better. When students receive high levels of feedback they tend to view the professor as being more critical of them (Ackerman & Gross, 2010).
   - Consider how students will use the feedback: Put minimal comments on final versions of assignments. On short assignments, comment sparingly and discuss in class model student work or common problems (Bean, 2014, p. 313).

3. **Provide limited, focused feedback that "feeds forward":**
   - Take a "top down" approach: Consider which aspects of the assignment are most important and allot your time and feedback accordingly, spending more time on argument or evidence and less on grammar or typos, for example.
   - Try a "minimal marking" or targeted approach**: Use a code or number system for marginal comments, and limit those to 2-4 most important problems or patterns of error. Make students responsible for applying feedback – for finding and correcting errors.

4. **Consider the affective aspects of grading and feedback.**
   - Address both strengths and weaknesses. Praise when warranted, and make positive comments specific. Avoid connecting praise with criticism: "good idea, but…"

   - Evaluate the work instead of the worker. ("The paper does X." instead of "You did…") Help students separate a critique of their work from a critique of their person.

5. **Implement strategies to help maintain fairness and consistency**
   - **Scan & sort before evaluating in detail.**
     - First, scan and sort student work into categories (by question, quality, whether it meets basic expectations, etc.)
     - Quickly read through each before commenting to help identify which problems to focus on.
   - Refresh your memory if you are responding to student work over several days or after a break. Review your comments and recalibrate your expectations to meet those during your earlier sessions.

6. **Reduce the likelihood of unconscious bias**
   - Beware the "halo effect"; grade without looking at names.
   - Vary the order in which you grade essays. If an essay exam, shuffle the exams after grading each question.
   - Don't attempt to grade more than 10 at one sitting without scheduled breaks. Take a break if you start to feel cranky, tired, or restless.

7. **Consider alternative formats for feedback.**
   - Short one-on-one conferences, audio or video responses provide alternatives to written comments.
   - Student responses to audio/video feedback are favorable (Rotherham, 2009; Ferguson, 2011, etc.) because they perceive it to be "helpful," clear, detailed, and personal (a factor associated both with improved student-instructor relationships). In one study, handwritten feedback was rated least helpful. (Crews & Wilkinson, 2012 p. 22)
   - Another study (Martini & DiBattista, 2014) demonstrated that audio feedback successfully fostered learning transfer to other assignments.

8. **Provide reader-based feedback or "revision-oriented" (Bean, 2014) comments**.

- **Writer-based comments** identify problems using the technical language of writers as codified in dictionaries and handbooks. Often focusing mainly on judgments or criticism, they tell the writer what is good or bad about the draft.

- **Reader-based comments**, in contrast, provide what Peter Elbow, in *Writing Without Teachers* (1998, 2nd ed.)*,* calls a "movie of your mind" while reading; they tell the writer where the draft is working or not working —where the reader is excited or lost. Reader-based comments give information about what's in the reader's mind while reading the draft. Research shows that reader-based comments promote revision more effectively than writer-based comments.

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Comparing writer-based and reader-based commentary

WRITER-BASED	READER-BASED
This paragraph needs a topic sentence.	Can you clarify the point of this paragraph?
Your introduction is weak.	I'm confused by the first line. It's hard to see how it relates to what follows.
You need to insert a thesis statement in your introduction.	I had trouble understanding the case you were making. Where do you state your thesis?
Your use of figures is inaccurate.	How does Figure 4 support your argument?
Your argument is full of non sequiturs.	Can you clarify the argument here? I'm not sure how you got from A to B.
You should never include _____.	I was left wondering why you included _____.
Your transitions need work.	I can't understand how _____ connects to the following paragraph about _____.
Your argument was unconvincing.	I started out believing your case, but as it went on I became more and more skeptical until I began to question even the first part that I'd found convincing.
Your piece needs a lot of work.	For the next draft, I would be more convinced by your essay if you focused more on the following three issues: _____, _____, and _____.

Providing Feedback on Drafts: From first-order to lower-order concerns ©John C. Bean, 2010

CONCERNS	READER-BASED MARGINAL COMMENTS	POSSIBLE END COMMENTS
Does the draft follow the assignment? If not, further comments serve no purpose. Consider returning the draft unmarked and ungraded.		*Ingrid, this draft doesn't follow the assignment. Please reread the assignment handout and start anew. If you need help, please see me.*
Does the draft address a problem/question? Does it have a thesis? Does the draft wrestle with a real question or issue? Is there a thesis? Can you tell where the draft is headed? Is there an argument (not an all-about report or a data-dump)?	*I'm having trouble figuring out your thesis. What are you arguing?* *I can follow what you are saying, but I can't figure out why you are saying it. Can you turn this information into an argument?*	*Serena, although I can see good ideas along the way, I can't find a thesis in this draft, nor is it clear what problem or question you are addressing. This draft needs global revision starting with establishing a good thesis. Please see me for help.*
What is the overall quality of the writer's ideas/argument? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the writer's ideas? How effective are the supporting reasons and evidence? Are the ideas developed with sufficient complexity, subtlety, and insight? Is there adequate attention to opposing views or alternative theories? Where is there conceptual confusion or lack of clarity?	*Interesting!* *Good point—I hadn't thought of it in quite this way.* *Expand and explain; could you give an example?* *Here you seem to be giving me information rather than analysis* *Confusing—What theory are you applying here* *Can you anticipate a skeptic's objections here?* *What's your evidence for this point?*	*Paula: I like very much your discussion of Diem's leadership and the rise of dissent in Vietnam. You set your ideas clearly and with strong evidence. However, in the middle of the paper, you need to expand and clarify your discussion of Vietnamese attitudes toward American soldiers. I wasn't quite sure what your point was in that whole section. Again check my marginal comments to see where I got confused.*
Is the draft effectively organized? Imagine a bird's eye view of the title, introduction, and opening sentences of paragraphs: Can you outline the argument? Does the introduction forecast something? Does the paper fulfill that forecast? Are there parts that don't fit or should be moved? If you get temporarily lost, does the overall argument start getting clearer at the end (a sure sign that the writer is clarifying his or her ideas as she writes)? Where do points need more development?	*Whoa, you lost me.* *How does this part relate to what you said on the previous page?* *Can you clarify your point in this section?* *You seem to be making several different points in this paragraph* *Your introduction made me think you would do X next, but this is about Y.* *You're bouncing all over. I need a road map of where we have been and where we are going.*	*Diego, in the beginning you really captured your reader's interest, but then I started to get lost. By the end of the paper your argument became clear again. For the next draft help your reader out by moving your thesis up to the end of introduction. Also, the reader might need a preview map.* *Hisako, your argument was going great until page 3 and from there on I got lost. Note my marginal comments. Please revise pages 3-5.*
Is the draft free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling? Rather than marking or correcting grammar errors, use a carrot/stick method to motivate students to find and fix their own errors. Send them to a reference manual if you notice patterns of errors.	*These grammar errors get in my way.* Put checks in margin of lines with grammar errors, typos, capitalization problems, and so forth.	*Suleng, no grade yet because your good ideas are marred by too many sentence level errors.* *Kim, note grading penalty for grammar/mechanical errors. Fix errors, and I'll remove the penalty.*
Is the draft free of stylistic problems that impede understanding or conflict with the assigned genre and audience? Whereas grammar errors are rule-based, stylistic problems are rhetorically based. Typical style problems include wordiness, inappropriate use of the passive voice, wrong level or formality or politeness, use of insider language (jargon) for outsiders, and so forth	*Wordy!* *Avoid use of "I" in this genre* *Will your audience understand this jargon?* *Inappropriate slang—this is a formal genre* *Can you make your tone less angry and sarcastic?* Consider making your own marginal codes for stylistic problems that bother you	*Sam, you need to streamline your prose by cutting out deadwood.* *On your next draft, Lawanna, really write to a non-specialist audience rather than to me as teacher.*