



## Commenting and Grading

### Main takeaway

Commenting and grading are two separate activities that play important roles in writing instruction. Commenting on drafts provides students with *formative* guidance and advice that encourages revision, while grading final products is a *summative* evaluation of how well students did upholding the expectations of an assignment. Instructors use the evaluation criteria to communicate to students what they're being asked to do, how to achieve success, and how they'll be evaluated.

**When designing writing assignments for resiliency, include written detailed evaluation criteria when a project is first assigned to provide students with an explicit “roadmap” for what they are practicing/learning and how to achieve success in that specific writing situation.** Detailed evaluation criteria can also make commenting and evaluating student writing **more efficient for instructors.** Asking students to submit digital drafts makes it **possible for instructors to comment on and grade assignments even when class may shift between in-person, hybrid, and online environments.**

### The purpose of commenting is to guide revision

- Don't waste time on hastily written, incomplete work
- Use evaluation criteria to focus on the most important problem areas and save time by sharing comments about common weakness with entire class orally, in video, or in a written document
- Use minimal marking (don't mark every grammar error, mark one or two and note that there are more)
- Give students responsibility for revising (don't revise or edit for them)

### Hierarchical strategy for commenting on drafts

1. Limit comments to a few problems you'd like students to focus on
2. Does the draft follow assignment? If not, don't comment and hand back
3. Does the draft address a problem/question or have a thesis?
4. What is the overall quality of writer's ideas/arguments?
5. Is the draft effectively organized?
6. Does draft effectively manage old and new information?
7. Is draft free of grammar, punctuation, spelling errors?
8. Is draft free of stylistic problems? (Bean)

### The purpose of grading is to evaluate how well students met the expectations of an assignment and to uphold the standards of your discipline/profession

- For informal writing, keep grading simple with credit/no credit, a simple 5-point scale, etc.
- For other assignments, use grading criteria (perhaps a rubric) as your guide