

# Appendix

## Responding to Student Writing for Editing

Feedback plays a crucial role in acquiring a language. As students in the Expository Reading and Writing Course struggle to express increasingly sophisticated ideas in writing, they need to know if they “got it right” and if not, how they can modify what they have written so it will be “right.” The dilemma for the teacher is how to provide feedback that is cost-effective, in other words, where the teacher’s time and effort and the student’s progress are in balance. Teachers can spend large amounts of time marking the students’ errors, but if the feedback doesn’t result in improved writing, it’s a waste of time. Teachers need to get the most out of a relatively modest amount of time invested in marking student errors because they also have to give the students feedback on the global aspects of their writing: the ideas and the ways in which they are organized and developed. What follows are some suggestions for responding efficiently and effectively to student errors.

- **Ask your students to edit for grammatical correctness as the last step of the writing process.** In an out-of-class writing situation, it’s a good idea to advise your students to set their papers aside and come back to them later with fresh eyes. In a timed situation, students should budget their time and reserve the last few minutes for editing.
- **Explain the role of editing.** Help your students keep sight of editing as a rhetorical tool that they can use to make their arguments clearer and more persuasive. Make sure your students don’t view it simply as busy work and that they understand that the skills they are learning will serve them well in college and on the job.
- **Target key error types.** As you select what to mark, consider the seriousness of the error, its frequency, and whether the rule is simple enough to remember and apply in other situations. Help your students to identify their patterns of errors and edit systematically for them. Limit your marking of other errors.
- **Identify errors, but don’t make corrections for the targeted error patterns.** At the beginning you will need to label targeted errors, but make your students responsible for repairing the error. Once your students are familiar with their personal patterns of error, you can simply underline or highlight errors. Ultimately, your students should be able to identify and correct their own errors. Supply

corrections for serious errors that you don't think the students will be able to correct independently.

- **Provide students with correct words or phrases for lexical errors—those not governed by rules.** It isn't helpful to tell your students they have used a wrong word when they have no way to figure out the right word. Instead, supply the correct word or phrase, but ask the students to keep a log of these words that they can use to edit future papers.
- **Teach your students how to use a dictionary for editing.** Dictionaries, particularly those designed for learners of English, provide valuable information about the language beyond definitions. Students can check if a noun is count or non-count or find out what preposition follows a particular verb, but they need instruction and practice in using a dictionary in this way.
- **Systematically mark the errors in one or two paragraphs.** Give your students class time to edit when you return their essays. After reviewing the paragraphs that you have marked, the students can apply what they have learned to the rest of the essay, and you can answer questions that arise on the spot.
- **Give your students feedback about their editing.** Even when students make their best effort, they will produce new and different errors when they edit. The students need feedback so they don't assume those new errors are correct.
- **“Debrief.”** After your students have written an in- or out-of-class assignment, ask them about the editing strategies that they used and what they would do differently next time. Before their next essay, ask your students to recall what they learned the last time.

## A Very Short List of Editing Labels

Students need to have their sentence-level errors labeled in order for them to learn to identify their errors. Using a minimum number of labels makes it easier for the students to remember what they mean and also speeds up the job of marking for teachers. The following labels are used in the exercises in this book. Using them consistently in marking student writing will help your students locate their errors and understand that individual errors are often part of a larger pattern of errors that they can and should master.

noun	All errors in formation of nouns; plurals and singulars
verb	All errors of verb form (endings) and verb tense
s-v agree	Subject-verb agreement
run-on	Run-on sentence or comma splice
frag	Sentence fragment
punct	Punctuation error
sp	Spelling error
sent	Sentence error—error in the way clauses are formed and joined