

Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip

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Grading end-of-semester papers/projects

Rationale: Grading student writing at the semester's end differs substantially from early or mid-semester grading. There is no need to provide extensive comments on final papers; research indicates that unless students have the opportunity to revise, they pay scant attention to instructor comments.

Be strategic in your approach

- Use a [grading rubric](#) or scoring guide to streamline the process. Share and discuss the rubric with students when you distribute the assignment.
- Demystify the assignment by showing students [samples of completed work](#).
- Review the assignment to remind yourself of the most heavily weighted criteria.
- Liberate yourself from offering extensive comments at this stage; focus instead on brief, evaluative comments—tied to the rubric—recognizing that students interpret comments accompanying graded drafts as justifications for the grade.
- Practice [minimal marking](#) if you wish to respond to grammar, spelling, punctuation, or syntax errors.

Include peer and/or students' self-assessment

- Use [peer review](#) as part of the writing-and-revision process.
- Ask students to assess their work against the grading criteria contained in your [grading rubric](#), and to attach the results with a [cover letter](#) when they submit the final draft. Use students' self-assessments to focus your brief comments.

Be substantive and specific

- Offer brief evaluative comments: one comment to point out what the writer did well, and, when relevant, one critique that students can apply to writing in future assignments. For example: "The results section of your paper presented the findings of your study without offering interpretation of those findings or directions for future research. This is a standard component of scientific papers.""]
- Avoid grading on "effort" or "improvement." University of Minnesota grades are [achievement-based](#).

Learn more:

- Managing the paper load:
http://wac.gmu.edu/supporting/writing_at_center/how_to/managing_the_load_zawacki.php
- McKeachie, W., & Svinicki, M. (2013). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. 14th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Methods of response:
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/faculty/methods/responding.html>
- Principles of response: <http://vanhise.lss.wisc.edu/wac/?q=node/85>
- Responding to and grading writing: <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/responding/grading.html>

Questions? Visit us online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/index.html>

Further support: Contact a member of the WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) team for a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation: <http://z.umn.edu/twwconsultation>

Our purpose is to provide practical strategies for teaching with writing. Our goal: to offer timely and pragmatic support to faculty members and instructors who teach with writing in undergraduate and graduate courses in all disciplinary areas.