

Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip



Clarify instructor expectations with annotated student writing samples

Rationale: Showing instructor-annotated samples of student writing helps learners understand how specific grading criteria will be applied to their own writing.

Step One: Gather student models to supplement assignment instructions and grading rubrics.

- Obtain [students' written permission](#) to retain a copy of their completed drafts and/ or final projects.
- Inform students that you will use the samples in future semesters, but not the current term.
- Protect students' confidentiality and redact students' name, date of submission, and any other personally-identifying information. Assure students that samples will be used only for instructional purposes.

Step Two: Analyze each sample to identify excerpts/passages that fail to meet, meet, or exceed your expectations (as expressed in grading criteria).

- Keep your assignment instructions and grading rubric/criteria handy as you analyze each sample.
 - A "Design Flaw Analysis" assignment in a 1000-level Design course, for instance, required students to describe a designed artifact, to identify and describe perceived flaw(s), and to propose a design solution.
 - The evaluation criteria for the assignment included organization/logic; clarity, creativity, and depth of analysis; and mechanics.
 - Each annotation should describe how the excerpt relates to instructor expectations (as stated in the assignment instructions and/or grading rubric).
- Annotate a sentence or excerpt to illustrate how/where it fails to meet grading criteria.
 - One paper analyzed the flaws in a prepaid calling card, and argued that: The flaw in this phone card lies in how they marketed it to be easy and able to use everywhere.
 - Use the annotated sample to engage learners in a conversation about expressing ideas in a logical manner.
- Annotate a sentence or excerpt to illustrate how/where the writing meets expectations.
 - One writer described the designed product: "The Hot Tools Ceramic Straightener is shaped like a pair of tongs; each tong is 9.25" in length and 3.5" in width."
 - This sample could be used to invite discussion of the instructor's expectations for descriptive writing.
- Annotate a sentence or excerpt to illustrate how/where the writing exceeds expectations.
 - One paper addressed the perceived flaws in the lid of a travel mug, and proposed a new lid design, which, as paper argued, "would provide consumers with greater satisfaction because the new design would prevent spillage and leakage."
 - Use the annotated sample to spark an in-class discussion of the criterion addressing clear and creative design solutions.

Comment: Students benefit from seeing models of effective, less effective, and ineffective writing. Using samples of student writing helps learners understand what they should aim to produce (Carroll, 2002).

Resources:

- Carroll, L.A. (2002). [*Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers*](#). Studies in Writing and Rhetoric. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press. Republished in 2011 by the WAC Clearinghouse.
- Thaiss, C., and Zawacki, T.M. *Engaged writers, dynamic disciplines: research on the academic writing life*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Campus Writing Program. (n.d.) [Writing matters #8: Teaching your field's forms of writing](#).
- Zawacki, T.M. (2006). ["What does my teacher want?" What students say about teacher expectations and best practices](#).

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

Check out this semester's Teaching with Writing events: Log in to your ULearn account: ulearn.umn.edu. Use the search for C4W to view all events hosted by the Center for Writing.

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.