

General Guidelines for Evaluating Papers

Evaluating Content

Read the paper through holistically with the following questions in mind:

- Is the paper set up in the correct format?
- Is the thesis or main point/argument of the paper clear?
- Is the paper easy to follow? Does it flow easily from one point to the next? (Coherence)
- Does the student explain each point clearly and completely? (Development)
- Are all the pertinent points included, and are they arranged in a logical order? (Organization)
- Is the paper written in such a way that the sentence structure and vocabulary are appropriate to the topic and the level of the class? (Style)

After you have a general impression of the paper, go back through and make comments in the margins; questions are often less intimidating to students than direct criticisms. At this time you might also mark any grammar/mechanics errors. Using your grading rubric, evaluate the overall success of the paper.

Evaluating Grammar and Mechanics

Use editing or revision symbols. Perhaps underline the incorrect (or non-standard) construction and identify the type of error in the margin.

You don't have to mark every error, nor do you have to correct errors for the student. The paper is the student's work, and part of his/her assignment is to learn from mistakes. Students are capable of improving their own writing if they are willing. If the student has many serious problems with grammar and/or mechanics, refer him/her to a good handbook, a tutor, or the writing center.

Even if you do not consider yourself an expert in writing or do not feel confident labeling errors, you will still recognize sentences that distract the reader from the flow of the paper. Underline or highlight those sentences and direct students to revise those problem areas.