

TEACHING AND ASSESSING GRAMMAR IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Assessing Grammar Effectively

This presentation will cover:

- Ways to address grammar in the writing classroom.
- Methods of marking grammatical errors in student papers.
- Grammar resources for students outside the classroom.

Students and Grammar

Students' relationship with grammar is often an **antagonistic** one. They may believe that...

- Grammar isn't as important as **expression**.
- If they're bad at grammar, then they're **bad writers**.
- Writing is **only** a matter of grammar.

Grammar in the Classroom

However...

- Grammar mistakes can distract the reader from their ideas/expression.
- Grammar affects a writer's ethos:
 - Did the writer seem educated?
 - Did s/he appear to take the work seriously?
 - Tools like spell check aren't always accurate.

Grammar in the Classroom

Methods of including grammar instruction:

Weekly “mini” lessons.

Student grammar presentations.

Conference “tutorials.”

Independent study guide and test.

Weekly Mini-Lessons

If your strength is lecture:

- Choose a common error you've noticed in students' papers that week.
- Illustrate the error in context.
 - Bring photocopies of a paper excerpt.
 - Work on an overhead copy.
- Offer methods of recognizing the error.
- Have students work in pairs on a sample text

Weekly Mini-Lessons

What to keep in mind with this approach:

- Inform students early on that their papers will be used as sample texts.
- Don't identify the writers of sample papers.
- Nobody wants to be the "bad example."
- Give students a chance to identify/fix the error before you give it away.
- Let students do the work

Student Grammar Presentations

If you're a fan of group work:

- Have students pair up and draw grammar topic from a hat.
- On their scheduled day, each pair will:
 - Give a 10-minute presentation.
 - Create an accompanying handout for the class.
- Encourage students to make presentations fun (quiz shows with prizes, role playing, etc.).

Student Grammar Presentations

What to keep in mind with this approach:

- Point students to resources like the OWL or a writing handbook.
- Make sure students understand the grammatical jargon they encounter/use. Will their audience understand it?
- Meet with pairs during conferences to preview their presentations.

Student Grammar Presentations

If you need to use conference time:

- Address grammar one-on-one in context.
- Using the student's recent writing:
 - Focus on one pattern of error at a time
 - Have the student identify and correct the errors in his/her own paper
 - Model revision techniques/alternatives

Student Grammar Presentations

What to keep in mind with this approach:

- Don't overwhelm the student. Focus on only one or two errors per conference.
- Give students a mini-assignment or goal for next time:
 - Example: Eliminate comma splices in your next paper.
 - Example: Be able to summarize the rules for semi-colon use.

Independent Study Guide

If you're a proponent of individual study:

- Hand out a packet of grammar study materials at the beginning of the semester.
- Use a sample text each week to illustrate a grammar rule from the packet.
- Hold a class review session.
- Schedule a test or quizzes over the materials

Independent Study Guide

What to keep in mind with this approach:

- Give students opportunities to see the grammar rules and concepts in context.
- Review rules and concepts in conferences.
- Have students work on sample texts in class.

Making Grammatical Errors

When you're grading papers:

- Focus on a **pattern** of error.
- Correct only the **first instance** of an error.
- Place a check mark in the margin beside the line where the error occurs.
- Discuss patterns during conferences.
- Resist the urge to edit—let the student do the work!

Proofreading Strategies

Discuss proofreading strategies in class and encourage students to:

1. Read their papers out loud.
2. Have a friend or roommate read it out loud while they look on.



Proofreading Strategies

3. Read backwards (from last sentence to first) in order to focus the brain on sentence-level error.
4. Print a paper copy and edit by hand. Give students a handout of editorial symbols to help them.

— — Insert a dash or
change a hyphen
to a dash

She's here [^]finally!

○ Spell out

⑤ people

/ Use lowercase letter

~~F~~irst ~~Q~~uarter

≡ Capitalize

Wilbury avenue

^ Drop below the line

CO²

..... Stet (don't change)

He ~~already~~ left.

= Align horizontally

Re: = Cost Analysis

|| Align vertically

|| To: Mr. Smith
From: Ms. James

Grading Follow-Up

Tips:

1. Encourage students to review and work on their errors:
2. Discuss errors during conferences.
3. Have each student review and summarize comments on his/her paper.
4. How will s/he recognize and correct this error from now on?

THANK YOU

Purdue University On-Campus Writing Lab
Krach Leadership Center (2nd Floor)

Web: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Phone: (765) 494-3723

Email: owl@owl.english.purdue.edu