



**CRLT**

**CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON  
LEARNING & TEACHING  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

# **Evaluating Student Writing**

## **CRLT Seminar Series**

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# Agenda and Goals

## Introductions

## Giving Feedback

- *Goal 1:* Review key research findings about relation between writing practice, feedback, and learning
- *Goal 2:* Gain strategies and resources for effectively and efficiently commenting on student writing

## Assigning Grades

- *Goal 3:* Examine and practice the use of grading rubrics in specific teaching contexts

## Session Evaluations

# Reflect and Discuss

What is the best feedback you've ever received on your writing?

What made it good?



# Practice, Feedback, Learning

According to research in the science of learning, students most effectively master complex skills when they:

- understand the **component skills** involved
- have frequent **opportunities to practice** component skills
- have **specific goals** in mind during practice
- receive targeted, well-timed **feedback**

See Ambrose et al, *How Learning Works*, esp. Chapter 5: What Kinds of Practice and Feedback Enhance Learning?

<http://crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/EvaluatingStudentWriting-Ch.5fromHowLearningWorks.pdf>

# Some Implications

If you want your students to learn from their writing and your responses to it, you should strive to:

- Be clear about the **component skills** successful writing in your course entails (e.g., paragraph development, data analysis, persuasive argumentation, integration of secondary research)
- Provide students opportunities to **practice** component skills (in short writing assignments, during discussion section, in office hours, on their own)
- Be clear about the primary **learning goals** of any given writing assignment
- Focus your **feedback** on a limited number of specific goals

# Think, Pair, Share

- *Think:* Brainstorm 2-3 additional component skills you imagine will be part of successful writing in the course you're teaching.
- *Pair:* With a partner, think about potential assignments you'll be grading this term.
- *Share:* What skills does successful writing in your field entail?

# Giving Feedback: Issues to Consider

- Using formative and summative assessment
- Balancing responses to global and local concerns
- Providing guidance rather than overwhelming
- Deciding how and when to provide end/lead comments and marginal/internal comments

# Giving Feedback

*You need to do more research.*

Every year <sup>wordy - be precise</sup> [on one Sunday in the middle of January] <sup>which Sunday?</sup> <sup>comma needed</sup> ↓  
tens of millions of people <sup>word choice</sup> cancel all events, plans  
or work to watch the Super Bowl. This audience in-  
cludes <sup>wordy</sup> [little boys and girls, old people, and house-  
wives and men.] <sup>Be specific - what reasons?</sup> Many reasons have been given to ex-  
plain why the Super Bowl has become so popular that <sup>and why</sup> ~~that~~  
commercial spots <sup>what spots?</sup> / cost up to \$100,000.00. One explana-  
<sup>awkward</sup> tion is that people like to take sides and root for a  
team. <sup>another what?</sup> Another is that some people like the <sup>spelling</sup> pagentry  
and excitement of the event. <sup>too</sup> These reasons alone,  
however, do not explain <sup>colloquial</sup> a happening as big as the  
Super Bowl.

*This paragraph needs to be expanded in order to be more interesting to the reader.*

In Sommers, N. (2003). Responding to Student Writing. In C. Glenn, M.A. Goldthwaite & R. Connors (Eds.), *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (p. 375). New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.



## Introduction

Silk production is one of the most distinguishing factors of spider species. The silk fibers produced by spiders accomplish many of their essential biological function, such as reproduction, prey capture, locomotion, and protection. Silk production occurs in specialized silk glands in the spider's abdomen. (need a citation here for first few background sentences. A good one is Foelix 1996. You can find the reference in my initial power point). Silk fibers actually primarily consist of large structural proteins called spidroins (spider fibroins) that form into fibers. These silk proteins usually spidroins include repetitive amino acid domains that dictate the structure and further function of the fiber. Conserved amino acid motifs can often be seen between different types of silks that indicate a form specific function secondary structures. For instance, repetitive alanine sequences four or more adjacent alanines dictate form crystalline  $\beta$  pleated sheets, known to add a shrink function to the fiber. [Next sentence seems out of nowhere because you haven't explained that all spidroins have non-repetitive N and C-terminal domains. In addition, there are other functions of these domains such as fiber assembly and solidification]. Also, the C-terminal domains of silk genes TuSp and ECP have been associated with extensibility and toughness (Gnesa et al. 201208). Some spiders, including *Argipoe trifasciata*, produce silk proteins nearly as strong as steel (Blackledge and Hayashi 2006).

Over 40,000 spider species have been identified (citation, e.g. Platnick (see my power point), yet very little is known about spider genomes or the greater than 380 million year evolutionary history of spiders. In our attempt to explore the spider genome, we will focus on identifying the genes of *Latrodectus geometricus*, and in particular the silk encoding genes of the brown widow. [These two sentences can be their own paragraph, but should be expanded a bit. For instance, provide some numbers about how many species have ANY genetic information or how many species have spidroin sequences. Also, should provide some background on WHY we would want to focus on *L. geometricus*. Probably this paragraph could be closer to end of introduction, e.g. right before goals].

Comment [NA1]: Distinguishing from what? You can say that silk production is one of the defining features/characteristics of spiders.

Comment [NA2]: Silk is incorporated into all of these functions but doesn't necessarily "accomplish" them. For instance, there are a lot of other components to reproduction in addition to making a sperm web and building an egg sac.

Comment [NA3]: May want to expand on the gland types a little bit here - e.g. tubuliform glands make egg case silk, major ampullate glands make dragline...

Comment [NA4]: May want to explain that in many species different spidroins are expressed in different glands explaining the unique functional properties of the fibers made in those glands.

Comment [NA5]: My edit here is to clarify that spidroins are repetitive. There may be other proteins incorporated into silk that are not repetitive.

Comment [NA6]: Not sure what you mean by "shrink function". Poly-A implicated in strength of fiber. Also, you need a reference here. OK to use one from my powerpoint.

Comment [NA7]: What kind of data supported this conclusion. Just need a very brief explanation of methods/results.

Comment [NA8]: Seems out of place. Might want to add earlier on that silks have spectacular mechanical properties and then use this as a specific example.

Comment [NA9]: Fairly important piece of information that has just been stuck at end of a sentence.

# Giving Feedback

The arrival of Tarek's mother, Mouna, added more depth to the influence Tarek and Zainab had begun to have on Walter. She began to assume a wife-like role in Walter's life, filling the enormous void his deceased wife left. Mouna, Tarek, and Zainab, simultaneously distort Walter's role as a host, while also contribute to his increased sense of home. Tarek stays grounded to his culture and home through the use of music, specifically the drums. Walter was reluctant to play the drums at first, which could be attributed to his association between music and his wife. However, with a little bit of encouragement Walter began to play the drums with Tarek, until it became one of his consistent pastimes. Tarek's love for the drums shows how heavily culture can impact the molding of a home; he uses music to immerse Walter into his "home", and rekindles Walter's love for music.

Just as Tarek, Zainab, and Mouna were the catalysts that activated Walter's renewed sense of home through their culture, Walter also offered them his own cultural knowledge. Initially, all Walter had to offer to the couple was a space; however, Tarek saw promise in what Walter could be as a person because he was persistent towards Walter when others hadn't been. When the impact of Tarek and Zainab started to take effect on Walter, he was incited to put his cultural knowledge of Tarek's legal situation to use. Mouna and Zainab would not have been able to navigate the legal system as efficiently or composed as they had without Walter, most obviously because they couldn't confront authorities with the same ease Walter could.

Christine ..., 7/12/2016 11:18 PM

**Comment [1]:** This paragraph feels a little unfocused. The topic sentence suggests that the paragraph will be about Mouna's filling a void; the second half of the paragraph is about Walter's learning how to play the drums and becoming immersed in Tarek's culture. Generally, I think that the idea of culture, because it's part of your definition, needs to be developed more. I'm not even sure that you need Mouna to make this point.

Christine ..., 7/12/2016 11:18 PM

**Comment [2]:** As a reader, I feel like I need another sentence or two at the end of this piece to wrap up the idea of how sharing culture developed emotional connections, so that we can then go on to the big piece of evidence for that: Walter's outburst at the immigration center.

# Some Options for Providing Feedback

- Hand-written comments
- A word processor's comment and track changes function
- Canvas SpeedGrader
- Screencasting/Audio feedback
- Face-to-face meetings

*When deciding on a feedback method, consider:*

- Your pedagogical goals
- The most appropriate method for responding to the assignment

# Grading Rubrics

- What is a grading rubric?
- Why use a rubric?
- Look at the sample rubrics provided. What component skills do they require? Which of these might be most important in your field?

<https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/sweetland-assets/sweetland-documents/teachingresources/GivingFeedbackonStudentWriting/GivingFeedbackonStudentWriting.pdf>

# Grading Practice: Breakout Groups

*Please choose a group and move to that area of the room*

- **Lab Report (psychology)**
- **Research Paper (geology)**
- **Reaction Paper (humanities)**
- **Evidence-based Argument (political science)**
- **Comparative Analysis (first-year writing, literature)**

# Breakout Groups

*In your small groups, read the sample paper and use the provided rubric to grade it. Then discuss the following four questions as a group:*

- 1. What grade would you assign this paper? Why?*
- 2. What feedback would you provide to the student for this paper?*
- 3. Identify any important drawbacks in using the provided rubric to grade your paper. How might the rubric you used be improved?*
- 4. Is there a different type of rubric in the packet provided that might be a better fit for this assignment?*

# Breakout Groups (cont.)

*Now, consider one of your own course assignments. Which rubric would best fit your own assignment(s), and how might you tailor it? We have provided a few potential templates of rubrics that you might want to use for your own course. Please take a few minutes to work on creating your own rubric for one of your course assignments. You can also use the space below.*

*After you've drafted a rubric, take a few minutes as a group to discuss what kind of rubric you chose, what you included, and why.*



## **Qs & Evaluations**

Thank you for your feedback  
on the evaluation form.  
Please feel free to approach us  
individually with questions!