

# Evaluating Student Writing

GSI Teaching Orientation, Fall 2013

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*Resources for this session online: <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/node/768>*

## Agenda and Goals

### Introductions

### Giving Feedback

- Goal 1: Review key principles/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 criteria 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**

*Helpful resource available: excerpt from Ambrose et al, How Learning Works*

## Some Implications

Given what we know about how learning works, if you want your students' writing to improve, you should strive to:

- Be clear about the **component skills** successful writing in your course entails (e.g., paragraph development, data analysis, persuasive argumentation, or 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

# Giving Feedback: Qs to Consider (salmon handout)

- Formative vs. summative assessment
- Global vs. local concerns
- Providing guidance vs. overwhelming
- End and marginal/internal comments

## What's your best feedback mechanism?

- hand-written comments
- “track changes”
- screencasting
- face-to-face meetings

## Giving Feedback

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/cost <sup>what spots?</sup> up to \$100,000.00. One explana-  
 tion is that <sup>awkward</sup> 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. These reasons alone,  
 however, do not explain <sup>too colloquial</sup> a happening as big as the  
 Super Bowl.

*You need to do more research.*

*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 5th 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 functions, 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.

## Grading Rubrics

- What is a grading rubric?
- Why use a rubric?

# Grading Practice: Breakout Groups

- **Lab Reports** (psychology): Amber
- **Components of a Research Paper** (environmental studies and genetics): Christine
- **Short Analytical Essays** (political science and anthropology): Theresa

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

## Breakout Groups

Take about 15 minutes to:

1. Familiarize yourselves with the rubric(s).
2. Read writing sample and assign a grade.
3. Identify 2-3 issues/questions you would highlight in your comments to the student.

Then... compare and discuss with group members:

- For what was the rubric useful?
- Would you make any adjustments to it?

*If time, repeat with a second example of student writing.*

## Qs & Evaluations

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