

Stage 5: Editing (Individual and Collaborative)

Final editing for writing conventions familiarizes students with standard mechanics and guides them toward submitting writing that is free from distractions. Collaborative groups are ideal for editing for such things as grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. Using a common set of editing abbreviations or marks will make it easier for students to edit papers efficiently and will provide consistency in the editing process. Common instructions to students might include those listed on Student Handout 2.10. Students who are struggling with writing mechanics may need extra time with a peer, tutor, or teacher to receive additional direct instruction or to practice specific skills. The activities listed below provide practice in editing:

Focus Lesson (Small Group)

Conduct a whole class focus lesson on a target skill (for example, using semi-colons). Collect student papers that are at the editing stage and redistribute them randomly. Arrange students into small groups of 3-4 and have them work collaboratively to edit each paper they've brought to the group, looking solely for the correct use of semi-colons (or whatever area you have covered in the focus lesson).

Pass the Paper (Small Group)

Arrange students in small groups of 3-4, and have them pass their papers to the person on the right. Distribute a handout showing common errors you've noticed in students' recent writing; discuss. Have students read the paper they've been given, looking for and marking the specific errors listed on the handout. Students should then pass the paper to the person on the right, who looks for and marks errors from the handout. This continues until students get their own papers back. Discuss with students the mistakes they found; offer guidance for correcting errors that are confusing.

Editing Journals

Have each student start an editing journal to keep track of the common mistakes he or she is making and to record how to correct them. Students can gather information for this journal from teacher- or tutor-conducted focus lessons, from one-on-one instruction from teacher or tutors, from peer feedback, and from printed resources (grammar texts, etc.). When it is time for editing, have each student first review the common errors listed in the journal and then look over his/her paper to correct those specific mistakes. This journal can also be a place to set specific goals for editing and to note progress.

Expert Group Editing

Set up several "expert" groups (3-4 people), each responsible for checking for one type of error (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, verb tense/agreement, etc.). Students in each group should receive specific instruction in their focus area and/or be chosen because they have shown mastery in this area in their own writing already. When it is time for editing, have students turn their papers over to an expert group to be checked only for one specific error (the spelling group checks only for spelling mistakes, etc.). Papers go through some or all of the groups, depending on the writer's proficiency.

