

Written Response (Peer)

Written feedback can be provided in addition to—or instead of—the verbal feedback described above.

1. Ask students to think about 2–3 questions or areas of concern they have about their papers. Then have them write these questions/concerns—as well as the purpose, form, and audience for the paper—at the top of their rough drafts.
2. Distribute Student Handout 2.7 and have students swap papers with another student in the class. They should read the questions/concerns posed by the writer and then read the paper TWO times, the first time without making comments so that they can get a feel for the whole piece and what the writer is trying to say.
3. On the second reading, students should write their thoughts/ideas in the margins of the rough draft (or on a separate paper as they go along). Comments should be honest and detailed and begin with words such as, “I really liked...” or “I wasn’t sure what you meant by...” or “It doesn’t seem effective when...” or “I wanted more information about...”. Comments such as “This is good” or “Don’t change a thing” or “You’re all done” are not effective for helping the writer to revise. See Student Handout 2.12 for comment ideas.
4. Using selected questions/directions from Student Handouts 2.8/2.9, have students give additional written feedback. They should focus on the most appropriate questions for the writing assignment or on specific questions you have assigned. They can write their ideas directly on the rough draft or on a separate paper (whichever you and/or the writer prefer).
5. Have students respond to peer’s questions/concerns by recording their thoughts/ideas on the rough draft or on a separate paper. Students should be encouraged to frame comments similar to those expressed in verbal response groups.
6. Using selected questions/directions from Student Handouts 2.8/2.9, have students give additional written feedback. They can write their ideas on the handout or directly on the rough draft (whichever you and/or the writer prefer).
7. Have students review the writers’ questions/concerns written at the top of the draft and write a response to them.
8. Have students return papers to their owners. Provide time for students to discuss the written comments and talk about what they’ll do next for revision. Another suggestion is to have students develop a revision plan together so that they’ll have a list of priorities when they revise.



Stage 4: Revising

To revise literally means to *re-see* (see again) a piece of writing and the writer's intentions. As students revise, they need to revisit the critical areas of audience, purpose, and form. They also need to review the components of writing pertinent to the type of writing they are producing. The revising stage is often the "teachable moment." At this point, direct instruction on effective introductions, transitions, or conclusions can provide powerful motivation and direction for improving one's writing.

Listed below are some suggested steps for supporting students during the revising stage:

- 1. GIVE EXAMPLES.** If possible, use drafts from previous students to model a first-draft paragraph and a later-draft paragraph (after revision). Give students printed examples of these drafts and have them work with a partner or in a small group to discuss what differences exist between the two. What did the writer do to revise? Display the samples on the overhead projector and have students share their conclusions. Use this as a jumping-off point for students to make decisions about their own revisions.
- 2. REVIEW.** Review the audience, purpose, and form of the assignment and the scoring guide. Refresh everyone's minds about what the paper should include and the criteria for evaluation. Using this information, model how to look at a paper to discern whether or not it appropriately addresses the audience and purpose in the correct form and whether or not it meets the designated criteria for effective writing. This activity generates lots of questions and discussion as students grapple with interpreting the scoring guide. It also sets the stage for focusing on particular criteria for focus lessons (for example, developing an effective thesis statement).
- 3. MODEL.** Ask for a volunteer who is willing to have his/her paper displayed to the class on the overhead projector. (It is often helpful for you, the teacher, to use one of your own pieces of writing as a model for revising; this reinforces that revising is necessary and useful for all writers and allows you to take some "risks" with the students.) Make an overhead transparency of the draft to use during the revision activity. Using the transparency and colored overhead markers, model some examples of what revising entails. Looking at selected sections of the paper and the accompanying notes/feedback, determine what should be deleted, added, or re-worded. Get student input for these decisions and explain the thinking behind the changes so students understand the decision-making that occurs with revision. This process also works very well with a projected computer screen, using different colored fonts to show changes.
- 4. INSTRUCT.** Conduct focus lessons on areas of need (sentence combining, thesis statements, introductions, etc.). After each focus lesson, have students directly apply the concept to their papers (individually or in groups). Some students will need extra attention to succeed in this area; work with these students in a small group while the rest of the class works independently or in small tutor or peer groups. The goal is for students to use their drafts to practice and fine-tune their understanding of effective sentence structure, thesis statements, etc.
- 5. PLAN.** Have students look at all the feedback they've received from their peers, teacher, and others, and then have them list their revision priorities (what they will address first, second, etc.). This step provides an opportunity to process all the feedback and direct it into a plan of action, which can make writing a much less daunting task.



6. **REVISE.** Using the feedback, the direct instruction you have provided, and the revision plan they've developed, have students revise their drafts. It is helpful for students to have "check-in" buddies (or accessible tutors) they can go to as they re-work a sentence or paragraph, someone who will listen to a new version and give immediate feedback. Establish a timeframe for completing the paper (students can then determine how many drafts they will have time for before the paper is due) OR establish a "floating" deadline, allowing student progress to shape when the papers will be turned in. If the goal is to really help students improve their writing, they will need time and guidance for writing multiple drafts. They'll also need practice determining when they are "done"—when it's time to stop revising.

7. **REVISIT PEERS.** Before students do their final editing, they (or a classmate) should read their revisions aloud to students who are familiar with earlier drafts and others who have not heard the piece before to receive final commentary. Students should save all drafts for later submission.

Revising is one of the most difficult stages of writing for most students. It is important to slow down and take the necessary time to model the thinking and writing strategies critical to revision. Students do not just magically know how to revise—they need lots of demonstrations and practice.

