

## RRCC WAC: 10 Best Practices for Responding to Student Writing

1. Focus on student learning rather than justifying a grade.
  - *Example: To improve the conclusion for this writing assignment and future writing assignments in this course, summarize the main points that were raised in the rest of the essay with a single sentence for each main point.*
2. Quote student writing in your response to help students find what you are referring to and encourage students to re-read their own writing.
  - *Example: This essay concludes with, “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” but this conclusion contradicts the earlier statement, “ \_\_\_\_\_. ”*
3. Connect responses to the course content, the assignment sheet, or previous lessons.
  - *Example: Use more terms from the textbook to describe the mechanisms of cells in the next writing assignment.*
4. Use descriptive praise to motivate students and encourage similar writing in the future.
  - *Example: I appreciated the clear and concise introductory paragraph that told me exactly what you were going to argue in the rest of the essay.*
5. Teach students rely to on resources to receive assistance with things that may not be taught directly in the course.
  - *Example: I was slowed down by the sentence fragments in this writing assignment. I recommend meeting with a [Writing Center](#) tutor to learn more about how you can address this issue in future writing assignments. You might also try [Grammarly](#), a free grammar checking application, or using [Purdue OWL's section on sentence fragments](#).*
6. Use direct and concrete language for suggestions and directions, and hyperlink resources.
  - *Example: For the next writing assignment, I suggest focusing on [finding academic sources through our Red Rocks library](#). If you are unfamiliar with finding library sources, [chat with a librarian online or in-person](#) and email me with any questions.*
7. Use a conversational tone to engage students.
  - *Example: While reading this essay, I thought to myself— why do so many people believe that this issue is not important? I think this question should be addressed in the next revision.*

- *Example: The following sentence was confusing to me as a reader: “\_\_\_\_\_”. Could you either describe your idea more or give us an example?*
8. Use open-ended questions to encourage critical thinking and student agency.
- *Example: “\_\_\_\_\_” is an interesting claim, but is there any credible evidence from our textbook or elsewhere to support it?*
  - *Example: What do other scholars have to say about this topic? I suggest doing a bit more research and finding at least one other perspective on this topic.*
  - *Example: Right now, this essay reads like a summary of ideas from other people, but I want to know: what do you think of this issue now that you have read the ideas of others?*
9. Explain comments and define unfamiliar terms.
- *Example: I would like to see more use of your own personal experiences in these reflective assignments. Personal experiences may include descriptions, stories, or anecdotes from your own life.*
10. Be aware of your own linguistic preferences, biases, and knowledge. Students may use language in ways that seem “wrong” or “incorrect” to you, but these ways might be completely acceptable with other readers. Their language use may also be an integral part of a student’s linguistic identity. The following are resources on linguistic diversity in the teaching of writing.
- [\*Students' Right to Their Own Language\*](#)
  - [\*CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Multilingual Writers\*](#)
  - [\*This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!\*](#)

### Further Reading:

Batt, Thomas A. “The Rhetoric of the End Comment.” *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2005, pp. 207–223. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/20176650](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20176650). Accessed 5 Nov. 2020.

[“How Can I Handle Responding to Student Writing?”](#) *WAC Clearinghouse*.

Lunsford, Ronald F. “When Less Is More: Principles for Responding in the Disciplines.” *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, no. 69, 1997, pp. 91 – 104. [doi:10.1002/tl.6908](https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.6908).