

GIVING FEEDBACK

Using Color-Coded E-Rubrics

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<i>Levels</i>	<i>Intermediate to advanced</i>
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Student autonomy in improving their writing</i>
<i>Class Time</i>	<i>One class session</i>
<i>Resources</i>	<i>Microsoft Word</i>



Writing assignments need not always be formal essays; both Harmer (2004) and Hess (2001) offer a multitude of alternative, short assignments to help students build confidence and autonomy.

PROCEDURE

1. **Before class:** Organize a writing topic to be assigned and a rubric (correction grid) to be used to correct student writing. Information about rubrics can be found in the References and Further Readings. Save your rubric in a handy place, such as on your computer desktop; this is now your e-rubric.
2. **In class:** Assign topic as usual, explaining to students that they must complete the assignment using Microsoft Word or Open Office. Be sure to provide the email or server address students have to send their writing to.
3. **In the case of in-class writing:** Follow your usual writing laboratory or workshop procedures. Once students complete their writing assignment, however, they send it to you as you indicated in Step 2. In the case of classrooms without computers, students may need to retype their assignments outside of class. They do not hand in a print copy. (This saves paper, too!)
4. **In the case of writing assigned for homework:** Once students complete their writing assignment, they send it as you indicated in Step 2.

5. Outside-class teacher correction (approximately 5 minutes for each student):

- Open the student’s writing assignment and paste the e-rubric onto the bottom of the page.
- As you read through the student’s writing, highlight the mistakes you wish to draw his or her attention to using the highlighting colors available in the font area of the Microsoft Word toolbar. As an example, you may want to highlight subject-verb disagreement in green and vocabulary errors in yellow (in the black-and-white example below, darker gray and lighter gray, respectively).
- Also highlight the relative area of the rubric which refers to the mistakes made, using the same color as above. Here’s a concrete example from a fictitious student paper:

As you reads through every student’s writing, highlights the mistakes you wish to draw the student’s attention to using the highlighting colors available in the fount area.

	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Could Be Better
Completed task?				
Organization				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Punctuation				
Spelling				

- At the end of your read-through and color coding, assign feedback as appropriate. This means you would check each area on the grid that applies, indicating to the student where you think the assignment is acceptable or needs improvement. In the case of a numerically scaled rubric, you would indicate a mark in each area in order to assign a final grade.
- Save each student’s assignment with e-rubric locally, then send it back by email with a brief comment (e.g., “Thanks for this,” “Enjoyed reading this”).

6. Student correction:

- Once students receive their assignments with your feedback, they should be required to correct them. This is an important step in learning writing autonomy. Again, depending on how your classroom is organized, this can be done during the writing period in class, if students have access to computers, or at home.
- Students resubmit their corrected writing to you at the same electronic address you indicated in Step 2.

7. **Second teacher correction time (approximately 3 minutes for each student):** This time, open both the first and second versions of each student's writing assignment, double checking that he or she has understood and corrected the mistakes you highlighted. If not, highlight as necessary, using the same colors as before. Save locally and email it back to student, with the final grade if required.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

Do not try to correct all student errors. Research has shown that this is not effective (Hyland, 2002; Tankó, n.d.). Instead, concentrate on two or three important, repeated mistakes the student makes. Experiment with your rubrics: simpler for lower levels, more complex for upper levels, slightly different for each assignment, specific for special-needs groups.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Arter, J., & Ford, L. (2011, January). *Finding and creating high-quality rubrics*. Paper presented at Anderson Conference: Shifting From a Grading Culture to a Learning Culture: Assessment Theory and Practice. Retrieved from <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/tlc/anderson-conference/documents/quality-rubrics.pdf>
- Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Hess, N. (2001). *Teaching large multilevel classes*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2002). *Teaching and researching writing*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Tankó, G. (n.d.). *Into Europe: The writing handbook*. Retrieved from http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/examreform/into_europe/writing.pdf