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Ten Tips for More Efficient and Effective Grading

By: Victoria Smith, PhD and Stephanie Maher Palenque

Many instructors dread grading, not just because grading takes up a sizable amount of time and can prove itself a tedious task, but also because instructors struggle with grading effectively and efficiently. However, effective grading does not have to take inordinate amounts of time, nor does one need to sacrifice quality for speed. The following tips can help instructors grade more effectively while enhancing student learning.

1. One and Done: Mention the error and explain how to correct it once. If the error occurs subsequent times, highlight the word(s) or sentence and/or use the comment balloon in Microsoft Word's Track Changes to draw attention to the error succinctly. For example, if a student uses second person in an essay, the instructor might compose the following comment the first time the error appears:

Avoid addressing the audience directly as it can come off as accusatory. Use words like "one," "individual," etc. If the student repeats the error in the assignment, highlight the second-person usage (the word "you," for example) and add a comment bubble stating "Avoid second person." This method not only saves time, but it also explains and reinforces the concept to the student.

2. Bank Comments: Keep a bank of comments about frequent errors students make and organize them in groups for easy access. Consider grouping comments according to module, assignment, and chapter, or grammar, content, and organization. For example, if an instructor sees frequent errors regarding point of view, keep related comments grouped in the same area to access them easily.

3. Frontload Feedback: D. Royce Sadler (2010) argues that feedback, though often retrospective, also has a prospective element or "feedforward" (p. 539), meaning, instructors need to write comments students can apply to future assignments. If teaching a class in which students submit both a first draft and a final draft of an essay, focus on providing more detailed feedback on the first draft. This method should help save time later and will hold the student accountable for reading and applying their first draft feedback. Also, in the final draft one can point out errors rather than explaining them again in-depth to the student. If it is evident the student has not revised his/her final draft according to first draft comments, refer students to the first draft.

4. Global Comments vs. Local Corrections: If a student has written the paper in the incorrect genre in his/her first draft, comment minimally on local-level issues—grammar, format, etc.—and instead focus comments on global issues. For example, if the student writes a summary of a work, and the assignment asks for an analysis instead, then it is best to comment globally. If the student needs to rewrite the entire essay, it is fruitless to provide copious commentary regarding grammar and mechanics.

5. KISS (Keep It Simple for Students): When making grading a teachable moment, be sure comments do not become so convoluted and esoteric so as to impair learning. Keep the language academic, yet accessible to the student.

6. Attitude and Approach: Make student learning the primary goal. According to Getzlaf, et al (2009) effective feedback is a mutual process involving both student and instructor. The students' involvement in learning is at

least partially dependent on their perception of their instructor's interest and friendliness, as well as their instructor's engagement and communication about their performance and their grades.

7. Conscious Use of Comments: According to Getzlaf et al (2009), effective feedback is applicable to future situations. Comment only when there is still something the student can do to improve the grade on a live assignment, unless they can use the comment on a final product to enhance learning and the quality of a subsequent assignment.

8. Avoid Surprises: Publish or distribute rubrics well in advance of assignment due dates so that students know how their papers will be evaluated.

9. Less is More: Instructors should avoid the temptation to respond to everything that calls for adjustments or changes. Brookhart (2011) reports, many struggling students need to focus on just a few areas or even one item at a time. If a student backs off from his or her paper because he or she is intimidated by the number of instructor comments, then all is lost. It is better to target two or three areas that need to be addressed for the student's success on future papers.

10. Questions for Reflection: Consider inviting reflective, critical thinking and further conversation in a productive, scholarly exchange with the student. Instead of telling students what they did "wrong," ask them to rethink their approach. For example, consider using a phrase such as "What is the most interesting aspect of your essay?" Or "What would draw your attention to this topic, as a reader?" This way, the student is not only prompted to make more thoughtful revisions, but also is given tools to use when considering how to write a hook for future essays.

Douglas B. Reeves, author and educator, said, "Technology sometimes encourages people to confuse busyness with effectiveness" (Reeves, 2010). Instructors sometimes equate certain grading practices such as an authoritative tone, strong criticism, or copious comments with being effective. In fact, the more conscious and deliberate an instructor is when delivering feedback, the better that feedback tends to be. Instructors often feel as though they must sacrifice effectiveness for efficiency, or efficiency for effectiveness. By honoring these guiding principles, instructors will realize that they do not need to make a choice between the two.

References

Brookhart, S. M. (2011). Tailoring feedback: Effective feedback should be adjusted depending on the needs of the learner. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed For Quick Review*, 76(9), 33-36.

Getzlaf, B., Perry, B., Toffner, G., Lamarche, K., & Edwards, M. (2009). Effective instructor feedback: Perceptions of online graduate students. *Journal Of Educators Online*, 6(2),

Reeves, D. (2010). *Transforming professional development into student results*. Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.

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[Call for nominations - Excellence in Online Teaching Awards](#)

[Nominate an online class or instructor for the 2016 Excellence in Online Teaching Awards!](#)

Time is running... There's only **3 weeks left** to submit your nominations! You can nominate your own class, or nominate one of your colleagues'. All faculty (adjuncts and per course) are eligible. Remember that there are two categories. The **Innovative Teaching with Technology Award** is open for any course (traditional, hybrid or online) that use technology in a creative or innovative way.

Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Use of clickers or apps to improve student participation and success rates.
- Use of multimedia elements that help students more thoroughly grasp subjects.
- Use of simulations or games who add a "real-world" perspective.
- Use of social networking tools directly in the classroom.
- Use of a specific technology-based pedagogy (i.e. Flipped classroom, Video assignments, Online discussions)
- Impacting the classroom climate or environment through the use of edu-tools.
- Organizing team or group work in a classroom through the innovative use of Blogs, Wikis or Journals.



The **Outstanding Online Course Award** recognizes an outstanding faculty member who has creatively utilized appropriate Internet-based technologies to teach online and/or hybrid courses in UNT Dallas. The nominees must have designed and taught one or more online or blended courses with an imaginative approach, well-designed course materials, and instructional strategies, and a demonstrated rapport with the course participants.

For more information please visit: <http://www.untDallas.edu/dlit/awards>



Monday Morning Mentor: Cynthia

It's a great way for you to start the week!

Join Cynthia (for no more than 20-30 minutes max) to discuss and answer questions regarding current issues important to online teaching and learning. This is a great approach to get faculty training in a compact format!

Monday, October 3, 8:30 AM - 9 AM, virtual (online)



Picnic Office Hours

Join Cynthia Johnson, our Instructional Design Coordinator, in an informal drop-in discussion. Just grab lunch from the cafeteria and find her in the red blanket on the lawn in the courtyard.

Tuesday, October 4, (12 PM - 1 PM),
Courtyard (Weather permitting)

Grading Cafe

Gearing up for Mid-term or Finals grading? Have trouble setting up your Grade Center on Blackboard? Don't know how to create and manage grade center columns? Please join us for our open "Grading Cafe." Staff from the Office of Distance Learning and Instructional Technology will be glad to assist you on how to organize your Full Grade Center.



Mid-Term:

The Blackboard Grade Center allows instructors to record, calculate and share grades with students through their Blackboard course. This session will show instructors the basics of recording and sharing grades and comments with students through the Grade Center. Come to this café and also learn some tips and tricks for managing grades.

Free tea and coffee, snacks, and a chance to break out of your office for a couple of hours!

Wednesday, October 5, 2 PM—4 PM, Founders Hall, Rm 127

Send [email](#) to register for this event.

Gamification Master Class: Learn all about gamifying the learning experience

[Track 5: Gamification]

Presenter: Pooja Jaisingh, Senior eLearning Evangelist, Adobe Systems

Everybody loves playing games, and even watching them. Research shows that games have the ability to pull the players towards the game where they follow the same steps repeatedly and strive to perfect their moves in the game. We need to find the magic mantra in these games and add it to the learning environment to make it a pleasurable experience.

Learning can be made fun, and learners can be kept engaged for longer, by applying game-design thinking to non-game applications. These gamification techniques aim to tap into learners' basic desires such as competition, achievement, rewards and status, which drives deeper engagement, higher completion rates and stronger results. Join Dr. Pooja Jaisingh, Senior Adobe eLearning Evangelist, as she takes you through the basics of applying gamification principles to a learning paradigm and clear all the myths attached to gamification. She will also cover different examples of gamification scenarios and its impact on learner motivation, engagement and achievement.

Thursday, October 6, 2016 @ 12 PM - 1 PM, Founders Hall, Rm 127

Send [email](#) to register for this event.



(Click the images to read the articles)



[Managing In-Class Learning Experiences in Flipped Classrooms](#)

By: Barbi Honeycutt, PhD

Source: Faculty Focus

 Time to read: 3 min

In this ongoing series focused on flipped and active-learning classrooms, we're taking a deeper look into how to create successful learning experiences for students. We've examined how to encourage students to complete pre-class work, how

to hold students accountable for pre-class work, and how to connect pre-class work to in-class activities. Now let's focus on the challenge of managing the in-person learning environment.

[Read more...](#)



[Interactive Video: Gimmicks and Game Changers](#)

by Caleb Hanson

Source: Learning Solutions Mag

 Time to read: 5 min

Video was a pervasive topic across the FocusOn Learning Conference in Austin this past summer. However, like many

other adopters of interactive video, conference attendees were unsure about the differences between the

different formats and weren't even sure where to start. Here is some fair advice from one of the presenters, whose company also happens to have been a sponsor of the event.

[Read more...](#)



[5 Creative Ways For An Effective eLearning Experience](#)

By Anand Timothy

Source: elearningindustry.com

Time to read: **3 min**

With the advent of computer, notebooks, laptops, and other modern gadgets, the medium of learning for school and colleges has become quite easy. Whether you want to opt for distance learning or you wish to learn a foreign language, now all happens at your finger tip. In just a few clicks, you get an opportunity to learn whatever you want. The method of learning education or any kind of learning through an electronic

device is called eLearning and it is becoming extremely popular everywhere. So, how can you, as a learning professional, create an effective eLearning experience?

[Read more...](#)



Mark Your
Calendars!

OCT 10 **30 Apps in 60 Minutes**
(2 PM - 3 PM) FH, Rm 127

OCT 11 **DLAC Monthly Meeting**
(10 AM - 12 PM) FH, Rm 127

OCT 11 **The Rise of Competency-Based Education**
(1 PM - 2 PM) FH, Rm 127

OCT 12 **BITS #2: Strategies for Providing Effective Feedback to Students**
(10 AM - 12 PM) FH, Rm 127

OCT 13 **How To Engage Modern Learners**
(12 PM - 1 PM) FH, Rm 127

OCT 17 **Monday Morning Mentor: Cynthia**
(8:30 AM - 9 AM), virtual (online)



Contact Us!

The **Office of Distance Learning and Instructional Technologies** invites faculty and staff to join and participate in our development programs. These events provide an opportunity to network with faculty from other departments, learn new instructional strategies and tools, and become aware of best practices in online teaching and learning. Hope to see you there, and don't forget to register for our workshops and sessions!

Please contact us with ideas and suggestions for future events:

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