

## READING AND RESPONDING TO A DRAFT

Purpose: to offer honest feedback about the writer's specific message; to read the writing objectively in order to articulate strengths and weaknesses; to offer specific suggestions for improvement.

### HOW TO APPROACH A DRAFT

- Put your pencil aside
- Read through entire draft
- Focus on content
- Check your comprehension

What is the writer's thesis?  
Does he support it appropriately?  
What conclusion does he draw?

- Note questions and confusion on separate paper
- Reread to identify source of confusion and/or questions

Is content the problem?

- ideas not explained clearly or sufficiently
- unrelated ideas included
- inaccurate information

Is organization the problem?

- hard to follow the line of thinking
- progression of ideas illogical
- too many ideas discussed at once

Is grammar the problem?

- errors impede comprehension

- Mark unclear ideas within draft and/or on separate paper

### HOW TO RESPOND TO A DRAFT

- establish priorities--What are the most serious weaknesses of the draft?
- limit your response to address priorities only
- focus on message; validate ideas
- summarize strengths of draft
- summarize what you understand the writer's message to be
- explain confusion clearly outlining idea/logic gaps
- ask clear, specific questions of the writer
- enumerate suggestion for improvement according to established

## CONSIDERATIONS IN MARKING ERRORS

1. *What are the student's purpose and goals for communicating in writing? Is this a free-writing, a journal entry, a letter, an essay?*

Know when to comment on errors and when to leave them alone. In fluency exercises or informal writing assignments, don't foster writer's block or inhibit fluency by holding student's responsible for grammatical accuracy.

2. *What is the student's written proficiency in English at this time?*

Beginning and intermediate students have presumably internalized the English language system to a lesser degree than advanced learners, so their limited linguistic repertoire is often insufficient to allow them to locate and find solutions to errors.

3. *What types of errors is the student making and with what frequency?*

"Global" errors, high frequency errors and/or errors that seriously impair the intelligibility of paragraphs and sentences merit a higher priority for correction than more minor "local" errors. Help build student self-confidence by focusing on high-priority errors while tolerating less important ones.

4. *What is the student's attitude about correction of written errors?*

Excessive embarrassment caused by one's errors can be an obstacle to learning from them. Students who manifest low self-confidence in their ability to express themselves in a second language need a greater amount of supportive feedback on their errors. Help build student self-confidence by focusing on high-priority errors while tolerating less important ones.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR MARKING ERRORS

1. **Don't mark every error.**
2. Determine which errors are "global" errors and "local" errors.
3. Select a few global errors, those which most seriously impede comprehension.
4. Put a checkmark in the margin of a line that contains an error that you believe the student should be responsible for.
5. Write an appropriate question in the margin to inductively lead the student to find the error.
6. Don't mark anything, but write an endnote about a few problems the student needs to work on in a revision.
7. Correct errors in one section only as a metaphor for the paper.
8. Write the appropriate article, preposition, word, or phrase the student doesn't know.

## GLOBAL VS. LOCAL ERRORS

**GLOBAL ERRORS:** A “global” error is a high-frequency error within a piece of writing or an error that seriously impairs intelligibility of sentences and paragraphs within a piece of writing. Global errors affect syntax and cohesion.

**LOCAL ERRORS:** A ‘local’ error is a more minor error, one that is confined to a single clause, rather than being an error which affects meaning across sentences and paragraphs. Local error involves morphology and word choices rather than syntax and cohesion.

Clause 1

Clause 2

- Since the harvest was good, was raining a lot last year.

The errors are these:

<u>Since</u> is attached to the wrong clause	Global
Subject <u>it</u> is missing	Local
Form of verb <u>was rain</u> should be <u>rained</u> .	Local

The errors in Clause 2 are local because they are confined to single clause. But misplacing the conjunction since is a global mistake, as it affects both clauses, that is it affects the meaning of the entire sentence. Since, like all conjunctions, relates the two clauses: it tells which come first.

Consider the impact on the on the meaning of the sentence when all the local errors are corrected, leaving the global error since alone:

Since the harvest was good, it rained a lot last year.

Local errors corrected

Consider the impact on the meaning of the sentence when only the placement of the conjunction since is corrected, leaving the local errors alone:

The harvest was good since was rain a lot of rain last year. Corrected

From the examples above, we can see that any one correction improves the sentence, but some do much more for the sentence than others. Correcting the global error, placement of the conjunction since adds the most to the sentence as a whole. Correcting every error generally overwhelms a developing writer and gives the message that all errors are equally important, when in fact, they are not.