

CTL Bulletin

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A bi-weekly information sheet by the Center for Teaching and Learning

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Designing & Responding to Writing Assignments: Online Resources

The new CTL website offers a variety of information on a range of topics related to teaching and learning. The newest addition is a list of resources on designing and dealing with writing assignments across the curriculum. The links to these resources can be found on the CTL website under the Curriculum & Teaching section at <http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/teaching.html>.

As a way to introduce these new resources, a few of the topics that can be found on the CTL website are highlighted here. The links here and on the website are organized by topic and include a short description of what each offers. Other topics on the website include how to address plagiarism, how to evaluate student writing, how to utilize reading journals, and how to design peer review activities.

How to Design Writing Assignments

Developing good writing assignments is not an easy undertaking. Have you ever given a writing assignment that created confusion for students, created a stack of papers for you, and ultimately did not meet the objectives you had hoped? Instructors can find direct links to concise, easy-to-use guidelines and checklists on the design of writing assignments via the resources below and on our CTL website.

- [California State University at Sacramento](http://www.csus.edu/wac/checklist.htm)
(<http://www.csus.edu/wac/checklist.htm>)
This site provides a checklist for designing writing assignments as well as links to more information on grading rubrics for writing and pointers on using peer response.
- [Colorado State University](http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/wassign/index.cfm?teaching_guides_active=assignments)
(http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/wassign/index.cfm?teaching_guides_active=assignments)
This is a comprehensive site with links to principles for designing writing assignments. It includes other resources such as sample assignments and grading criteria.
- [Manhattan College](http://www.manhattan.edu/services/wac/pages/designing_assignments/assignments.html)
(http://www.manhattan.edu/services/wac/pages/designing_assignments/assignments.html)
The Manhattan College site provides a checklist for designing writing assignments and other suggestions. It provides specific information on designing informal assignments and creating writing assignments particular to your discipline.

How to Handle the Paper Load

Writing assignments create a paper load for instructors – whether hard copy or electronic. Are there ways to manage the load and keep it at a minimum? The websites listed below offer practical tips on handling the paper load from the design stage through the response stage of writing assignments.

- [University of Texas at Austin](http://www.swc.utexas.edu/planning/workload.shtml)
(<http://www.swc.utexas.edu/planning/workload.shtml>)

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This University of Texas page provides a short list of practical tips for handling the paper load that results from writing assignments. Several of the tips are linked to pages that provide more details and guidance.

- [WAC Clearinghouse](http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/pop2k.cfm)
(<http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/pop2k.cfm>)
This is another excellent Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) Clearinghouse site that provides information on how to handle a load of papers. Tips on such topics as "focusing your commenting energies" are provided. This page also offers information on grading criteria and grading sheets and how they can help diminish the paper load.

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How to Respond to Writing

Responding to student writing can be a daunting task. For any given assignment, it seems possible to write responses that are equal in length to what the student wrote. Figuring out what to respond to, how to respond, and when to respond takes some preparation. The links below provide resources on various aspects of responding to student writing.

- [Colorado State University](http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/fys/respond.cfm)
(<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/fys/respond.cfm>)
This page offers answers to the question "how do I respond to student writing?" with information on becoming a writing coach and focusing on the drafting process. The page includes a link to sample materials and examples of various kinds of comments.
- [Dartmouth Writing Program, Dartmouth College](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/faculty/methods/responding.shtml)
(<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/faculty/methods/responding.shtml>)
The Dartmouth Writing Program offers a comprehensive look at responding to student writing with links to several topics on the stages of responding to writing and other resources.
- [University Writing Center, Texas A&M University](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/content/category/13/45/67/)
(<http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/content/category/13/45/67/>)
The University Writing Center at Texas A&M provides information on responding to student writing via a list of links that offer information on responding to graded and ungraded writing.

How to Address Student Errors

Addressing student errors is an important component in helping students to improve their writing. Students with poor writing skills or students who are non-native speakers of English may need guidance related to specific types of grammar errors. The Colorado State University webpage below provides numerous tips on how to identify and address student errors.

- [Colorado State University](http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/error/index.cfm?teaching_guides_active=assignments)
(http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/error/index.cfm?teaching_guides_active=assignments)
Separate from the general topic of how to respond to student writing, is the specific topic of addressing errors in student writing. This website provides information on topics such as initial error marking, ranking and highlighting errors, and determining error patterns, as well as tips on working with students to address errors.

The CTL also offers workshops related to writing assignments. If you are interested in learning more about responding to writing, please visit the CTL website at <http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl> and register for any of this semester's remaining workshops related to writing and the writing of non-native English speakers.

- **Responding to Student Writing:** Thursday, October 27 from 10:00 to 11:30am; Wednesday, November 9 from 2:00 to 3:30pm; and Monday, November 21 from 2:00 to 3:30pm.
- **Responding to the Writing of Non-Native English Speakers:** Wednesday, November 2 from 1:00 to 4:00pm.

For further information on workshops, consultations, or the resources listed here, contact Kate Hahn at mk-hahn@neiu.edu or 442-4490, or call our office assistant, Diane Gritton, at 442-4467.