

Writing Matters



Why a Newsletter?

Writing about a topic creates sustained critical thought in a way that other uses of language cannot. When students write about what they are learning, they not only learn better, but they also take ownership of their education. In addition, writing skills are consistently in the top three job skills listed as most important by employers. We can do our students a great service by offering writing in every discipline, but the task can often seem daunting! Therefore, I want to offer everyone tips and encouragement on how to use writing in your classrooms. Each WAC newsletter you receive will have one new tip on assigning writing, responding to writing, getting students excited

Making Your Life Easier: Using Rubrics

The Brain Freeze. Instructors experience it all the time, and I'm not talking about the headache you get from eating ice cream too fast. It's the freeze in all thought processes when you try to respond to student writing. You know it just isn't quite right, but you aren't sure how to communicate that to the student. If you wrote everything you wanted to say about the paper, you'd fill all the white

space in the margins plus an extra sheet of paper.

We've all experienced it as students as well. Our own professors return our papers, and we squint at the grade, wondering why on earth we received a "B" when we were just positive the work was "A" level work. Our own students often feel the same way.

There is a better way! Rubrics provide the instructor with a concise, concrete way to grade

writing. They provide the student with clear and instant feedback.

A rubric is simply a grid that lays out the expectations for a writing assignment. It has two basic parts: the components that will be graded and the various levels of achievement for each component. These grids can be as simple or as complicated as you want them to be, because the best rubrics are made by instructors spe-

cifically for particular assignments. For example, if you want to focus on developing ideas and grammar, those would be the two most important components on your rubric.

The documents attached to this email are general, non-discipline-specific rubrics that can apply to many types of writing. I would encourage you to take these rubrics and work with them, adapting them to fit specific assign-

The act of putting pen to paper encourages pause for thought; this in turn makes us think more deeply about life, which helps us regain our equilibrium. ~Norbet Platt