

Promoting Clear Thinking and Writing

Instructional Resources for Teaching Writing in a Scientific Course

The Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences

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Promoting Clear Thinking and Writing

Instructional Resources for Teaching Writing in a Scientific Course

Introduction

Having students write on topics in scientific courses can substantially improve their understanding of course material. Asking students to explain a concept in writing to a particular audience requires them to achieve first some kind of understanding of the material. Griffin¹ believed this understanding would be substantially more complete than a recitation of facts. He maintained that writing about a topic remained one of the surest ways of weeding out faulty or fuzzy thinking.¹ In this way, writing can become a useful tool that leads students to a greater comprehension of course contents. Indeed, Griffin¹ stated: "Writing is a primary form of higher education." (p 57)

Another benefit of requiring students to write is the reinforcement and development of their writing skills. Writing abilities, like many other learned skills, degrade without practice. The more opportunities that students have to express themselves in writing, the better the writers they become. Upon graduation, it is the students with excellent communication skills who are in demand in today's information-driven workplace.

This guide is designed to supply you with resources to promote clear thinking and writing in relation to the scientific or technical content of your course.

1. FAQs

Is it my job to teach English as well as my own subject?

No, you don't have to teach English along with the scientific or technical content of your course. However, by including a writing component in your course, you can provide opportunities for students to refine their ability to think clearly and to express their thoughts in writing. Like many other skills, from playing basketball to mastering calligraphy, writing is a developmental skill¹ that can degrade without practice.

How can I get students to write better?

Students' realization that their understanding of course material improves when they write about a topic is a powerful motivator. Some students have said that they enjoy writing regularly because it helps them to clarify their thoughts.

REQUIRE STUDENTS TO WRITE DRAFTS. Revising is an important part of the writing process and clear writing most often comes about through a process of refinement. Clear expression is seldom a one-step process for ideas take time to develop. Expressing these ideas so someone else understands them can take even more time. The desire to refine is noted as one of the behavioural differences between skilled and unskilled writers.

COMMENT ON THE DRAFTS. By commenting on each draft as the work progresses (see Appendix A), you can help students shape their thoughts and express them clearly. Studies show that early intervention in the writing process is most useful to students.

REQUIRE STUDENTS TO USE A WRITER'S STYLE GUIDE. Students should be encouraged to use a writer's style guide to help them write. Many excellent writing guides are available, and several are sold in the University of Manitoba's bookstore.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS WITH WEAK SKILLS TO ACCESS OUTSIDE RESOURCES. Students with weak writing skills and poor grammar should be directed to workshops and tutoring offered by the Learning Assistance Centre. Students with English as their second language can contact the English Language Centre on campus. The Centre offers individual assistance as well as courses geared to students who are mastering English.

Promoting Clear Thinking and Writing

How can I evaluate the quality of written work if my own grammar skills are weak?

Your feedback as to whether the students' ideas are clearly conveyed is as important as whether they have written grammatically correct sentences. Providing feedback to students at the early stages of writing can pinpoint weaknesses in logic and organization. This feedback on organization and clarity of thought is invaluable in developing students' abilities to express their thoughts. Your input can lead them to write clearly and concisely.

It is only at the later stages of writing, when a piece is nearly finished, that grammar comes into play. At this stage, marking where a grammatical error seems to have occurred, and requiring students to find and correct the error is often sufficient guidance. Identifying the specific grammar error by name is less important than pointing out an unclear sentence structure. A document identifying common grammatical errors is provided in Appendix B.

How can I find the time to grade written assignments?

Several strategies can be adopted to reduce the marking time of written assignments.

LIMIT REQUIRED LENGTH. You can tailor the required length of the assignment to the time you expect to have available for marking, cutting back on the required word count to allow for quicker grading. Champagne² suggested students benefit from quick feedback, and this factor requires you to set limits on the length of a paper. McKeachie³ concluded anything more than three pages' long was considered an essay, and often a five-page paper could reveal as much about a student's understanding as a ten-page one.

BREAK THE ASSIGNMENT INTO STEPS. You can also break a longer essay assignment into progressive steps (see Progressive-step essay, p-8), which are marked separately.

USE PEER REVIEWS. Finally, you can require classmates to act as peer editors to review and comment on drafts.

What is a peer review?

A peer review involves students reading and commenting on each other's papers at various stages of writing, using a prescribed format (see Appendix C). Initially, students may reluctantly show their work to another student for fear of embarrassment. With coaching in how to give fair reviews, students come to adopt the review process as integral to the revision process, especially when they see better grades as a result. Knowing that another student will read and comment on their work is a good motivator to work hard at using clear language. In this way, peer reviews can encourage better writing.

How can I discourage plagiarism?

Plagiarism is often caused by poor time management. Students may see a deadline looming and take a shortcut by submitting written work that is not entirely their own. The following strategies can reduce the likelihood of plagiarism:

ASSIGN EARLY. You can help students avoid this situation by assigning an essay or report early in the term. The early assignment avoids the conflicting demands placed on students at the end of term when instructors typically assign an essay. You can also require a staged submission of the writing assignment.

ASSIGN PROGRESSIVE STEPS. Assigning progressive steps (see Progressive-step essay, p-8) in a writing project means you can verify it at various points of its development, thus enabling you to spot any imported or uncredited text.

LIMIT RESOURCES. Lists of suitable resources can be established.

If you have a question about a writing component in your course, contact Barbara Metrycki for information and resources at:
Barb_Metrycki@umanitoba.ca.

2. Writing Activities That Work

Providing frequent opportunities in scientific courses for students to relay information in writing fosters the development of clear thinkers and writers. Griffin¹ claimed writing activities enabled students to sort out their own ideas and test their understanding of the material presented. Writing activities also promote independent thought and reinforce language skills. You can design written assignments so they spring from course material and goals. The following are some writing activities that work:

Course Question-and-Answer Page

McKeachie³ suggested students receive from you by e-mail or via a personal Web site a question-and-answer page about your course early in the term. On the page, you invite further questions by posting your e-mail address. A dialogue can develop between you and your students if you continue to distribute new questions and answers, not just to the student who asked the question, but to all students on the list. This exercise also promotes proper e-mail etiquette for professional communication.

Critique of an Editorial

Carlin⁴ described an activity where students agreed or disagreed in writing with an editor's point of view.

You instruct students to read an editorial and identify the editor's opinion on an agricultural issue related to the course. Students then state in writing whether they agree or disagree with the editor's slant, and include their reasons. You can find editorials on agriculture-related topics on the Opinion Page of the Western Producer and in many other Manitoba or national newspapers and magazines.

Five-minute Paper

Students write at the midpoint or end of a class about a concept or argument in a one- to five-minute paper. These papers are often called writing-to-learn papers because they require students to wrestle with the new material and achieve understanding. Griffin¹ believed writing in this way uncovered unclear concepts and the resulting understanding was found to be more complete than a straight recollection of facts.

For a five-minute paper, you would announce at the beginning of the class that a one- to five-minute paper would be assigned at the midpoint or at the end of class. In this activity, students are asked to think about the implications, processes or relationships of a concept. Sharp and others⁵ found exercises of this type could answer common questions grouped under “*Why?, What?, How? , or What If?*” They maintained alternating questions from these four types would appeal to the different learning styles of students.

The five-minute paper can give you valuable feedback about the effectiveness of your teaching. While the assignment is not usually graded, it is handed in. You can evaluate it in a short comment on its success in meeting the assigned objective. Such feedback is important to students’ participation in future assignments of a similar nature. Be forewarned: You may be pleasantly surprised at students’ grasp of the material, or dismayed at how little of the concept they have understood!

Some example questions which can be answered in writing-to-learn exercises are:

Why?

- To think through a problem, e.g. *How might a knowledge of soil testing be important to you as a practising agronomist?*
- To generate ideas, e.g. *Brainstorm to choose a topic for essay writing*

- To rearrange information , e.g. *Produce a concept map that shows how genetic modification relates to consumers.*

How?

What?

- To summarize in one’s own words, e.g. *Write to a non-technical audience explaining genetic modification.*
- To test information, e.g. *Record the procedure of a problem-solving process*
- To try things, e.g. *Recommend how to change a lab experiment*
- To take things apart

What if?

- To take information and create something new, e.g. *How can we improve the performance of this fertilizer?*
- To solve a problem, e.g., *Solve the problem of salmonella poisoning in foods.*
- To explain concepts to other students.

Issue Essay

Using media articles as their sources, students write a short essay on a current agricultural issue or topic related to the course. Tapping into current topics through use of the media promotes independent thought—a skill which is highly desirable in the agricultural industry.

McKeachie³ suggested students adopt the roles of members of the legal profession when writing an issue essay. His suggested outline follows (p 135):

1. State the issue and explain its importance.
2. As “prosecuting” attorney, have students state the argument against, with supporting evidence.
3. As “defense” attorney, have them present the other side of the argument.
4. As “judge”, have students sum up the arguments and arrive at a personal conclusion.

Progressive-step Essay or Report

Good communication most often comes about through a process of refinement. Clear expression is seldom a one-step process because ideas take time to develop. Requiring students to express their ideas so that someone else understands them can take even more time. Thus, writing drafts in a progressively developed essay is an important part of the communication process. Comments from instructors made early in a paper's development can be more valuable to the student than those made on the final assignment after the grade has been assigned.

You may benefit from a progressive essay in other ways. Being involved in more than just the final submitted paper, moves you from the position of judge to that of coach. The breaking down of an assignment into sections may encourage students to talk with you throughout the stages of its development. This increased interaction can result, in turn, in a clearer, and more easily understood final result. Finally, because you grade each step separately, you spread your total grading time throughout the term.

To allow for your involvement in the different stages of writing, break the assignment into four or five progressive sections. Ask students to hand in each section at a set date. Breivik⁶ suggested the paper, with the required sections, be assigned during the first or second class, along with a timetable for submission of progressive steps in its development. Students would hand the paper in at each of the set dates. Each step would be marked separately.

Breivik's⁶ suggested progressive steps are:

- Paper assigned
- Topic statements due
- Bibliographies due
- Outline of paper due, with references included where they will be used
- First draft of paper due
- Opportunities to rewrite papers
- Final papers due
- Selected papers shared and discussed by class

Summary

Students write in their own words an abstract of a news or journal article, which condenses the material to 10 to 30 per cent of the original, without omitting the essential facts. Because of the reduced final word count, summaries give student writers practice with accuracy and discrimination in choosing their words. This concept is vital to writing and yet may be a novel idea for many who are in the habit of padding their writing to fill pages, sometimes with meaningless text.

You instruct students to shorten the text, while capturing the author's meaning. Because a summary is at most 30 per cent of the original length, and frequently only 10 to 15 per cent of the original, students need to assess ideas to select those they will retain.

In the *Fundamentals of Clear Writing*, Hoole⁷ suggested the following steps in summarizing an original article:

1. Read the entire article through once, slowly.
2. Read the article through a second time, more quickly this time .
3. Read the article through a third time, taking notes.
4. Find the main idea.
5. Compose a title which reflects the main idea.
6. Copy the points of the article in order of importance, using paragraph divisions or headings as guides. Note: When first mastering summary writing, students may copy the exact words at this stage, rewriting them later into their own words. As students master summary writing, they may shorten the process by going directly to writing each point in their own words. This more closely follows note-taking processes.
7. Close the source.
8. Rewrite each point in the summary writer's own words, making sure each point is essential to the main message. Even if a point is made more than once in the original, it is only stated once in a summary. The summary writer can change the order of points.
9. Write a draft.
10. Count words.
11. Revise for length.
12. Revise for clarity.

Related summary exercises

- Griffin¹ described having students summarize articles that explored opposing points of views. With a subject like genetically-modified foods, for example, you would instruct students to find arguments for and, against, genetic modification. News sources such as the Western Producer and the Manitoba Cooperator, which can be found in the William R. Newman Library, often provide well-written articles on a wide range of agricultural or scientific topics. Many suitable articles may also be found in the magazines such as Scientific American magazine, housed in the Faculty of Science library.
- Meyers⁸ suggested having students work in small groups after an assigned reading to construct an outline of the general concept or idea expressed in the reading (p 126). The class subsequently would comment on the accuracy of these outlines.
- As a follow-up, Meyers⁸ suggested having students write a summary of each document read, maintaining the author's point of view and meaning in a one-paragraph or one-page summary. These summaries could be hand-written on transparencies and critiqued for accuracy by the class.
- Throughout the term, have students write several summaries from articles of varying lengths, gradually increasing the length of the original, from a 500-word original, to a 700 to 1,000-word original.

Three-page Essay

Champagne² maintained frequent short reports or papers returned with feedback were successful alternatives to the end-of-term longer essay. Shorter written assignments encourage students to keep up their writing skills.

A short essay is sometimes more effective than a long one because it can be graded quickly and returned promptly to the student. Anything over three pages in length is considered an essay, providing considerable flexibility in assigning length. Champagne² stated that the time it would take you to grade was an important factor that required limits be set on the length of a paper (p112). As students benefit most from quick feedback, which is seldom possible with a long paper and large classes, the required length of an assignment is best tailored to the time you will have available for marking.

Written Analysis of a Table

Griffin¹ suggested students be given a table of figures which would present some aspect of the agricultural industry related to the course. As students imagined a general audience who had never seen the table before, they would write an informative paragraph based on interpretation of the data. For example, a paragraph written from a table showing five-year Canadian flax exports could focus on the American Farm Plan or agricultural subsidies.

3. Communications Objectives

Establishing communications objectives in your course outline conveys to students your intention to include communications elements in ungraded and graded assignments.

Sample Technical Communications Objectives (65.203)

This course will develop the thinking, writing and speaking skills that students need to achieve success in the agricultural, agri-business or academic environment of their choice. The course aims to:

- Introduce communications' strategies for various audiences and situations
- Develop students' abilities to speak and write in order to transmit or receive information clearly
- Develop students' abilities to present information in professional-looking formats

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Choose an appropriate communication strategy for an audience or reader
- Organize their writing in a logical fashion
- Identify and focus on the main message
- Use formatting effectively to present their written information
- Organize the shorter writing task: e-mail, letters and short reports
- Write letters and memos that produce results
- Avoid plagiarism by adhering to correct referencing principles
- Think critically
- Avoid common grammatical errors in their writing
- Communicate through public presentations
- Speak confidently and authoritatively, with or without speech notes
- Package their skills in a job-getting résumé and cover letter

4. Evaluating Student Writing

Providing feedback on organization and clarity of thought in a document is invaluable to developing students' abilities to express their thoughts clearly. Peer reviews and standard evaluation forms are effective evaluation tools.

Peer Reviews

Students read and comment on each other's paper at the draft stages of a writing project, using a prescribed review format (see Appendix C).

Peer reviews have many advantages. Peer review groups mirror co-operative group tasks which students may encounter in the industry workplace. Peer reviews also lighten your marking load.

Studies show that students help each other the most by responding as readers.¹ Having a student reviewer respond to a paper from the stance of reader rather than as critic, helps to eliminate students' reluctance to submit their work for review by one of their peers. In a reader's stance, a reviewer points out areas of organization or writing that are unclear. Students often find that just knowing another student will read their written work is a good motivator to work hard at using clear language in their writing. Griffin¹ stated that "peer responses to writing can be just as effective as responses made by instructors."

Here are some peer review formats:

- Meyers and Jokes⁸ suggested establishing peer writing groups of five which would stay together during the term. In their groups, students would each read their papers aloud (or have another person in the group read) and would receive feedback on how well their writing communicated to others. Students then incorporated this feedback into papers that were graded individually.

- Similarly, Griffin¹ suggested scheduling 20- to 30-minute periods in which students could react to each other's writing in pairs or in groups of three to five members. Each report that was signed by another student as having been reviewed would earn a bonus mark in the grade scheme.

Writing Feedback Forms

A feedback form can often provide students with a more standardized evaluation of their writing than anecdotal comments can. A feedback form provides students with specific information about components of their writing, information that can be compared with others or from assignment to assignment. Pinpointing students' writing strengths and weaknesses gives them the opportunity to develop into better writers. Sample feedback forms are provided in Appendixes A and B.

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Appendix A

Writing Feedback Form⁹**A) Mechanics****Spelling: Number of errors** _____**Grammar:***The major grammar problem areas in your assignment are indicated by an X.*

- lack of subject-verb agreement
- improper pronoun-antecedent agreement
- misplaced or dangling modifiers
- sentence fragments
- comma splices and fused sentences
- mixed constructions
- lack of parallelism

B) Composition*Your assignment is assessed for composition elements on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being excellent. Elements not assessed are left blank.***Overall Organization:**

- logical sequence and connection of ideas 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- paragraphs built around single ideas 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- strong opening and closing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Language and Sentence Structure:

- concise language, no wordy phrases 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- precise, non-repetitive language choices 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- appropriate comparisons 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- language suitable to audience 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- active language (where appropriate) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- absence of ambiguous pronouns 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- variety of sentence lengths 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- gender-neutral language 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- consistent voice/point of view 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- absence of jargon and buzzwords 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix B

Companion Document to the Writing Feedback Form⁹

- **Grammar**
- **Overall Organization**
- **Language and Sentence Structure**

Grammar**●● lack of subject-verb agreement**

Incorrect: Each of the 10 job applicants were given a 30-minute interview.

Correct: Each of the 10 job applicants was given a 30-minute interview

●● improper pronoun-antecedent agreement

Incorrect: The instructor has asked everyone to bring their soil samples to class.

Correct: The instructor has asked everyone to bring his or her soil samples to class.

OR

The instructor has asked all students to bring their soil samples to class.

●● misplaced or dangling modifiers

Incorrect: We will be happy to send a park map for all motorists reduced to a smaller scale.

Correct: We will be happy to send a park map reduced to a smaller scale for all motorists.

Incorrect: To receive a degree, 120 credits are required by students.

Correct: To receive a degree, students require 120 credits.

●● sentence fragments

Incorrect: To give my family a comfortable home life. That is my most important goal.

Correct: To give my family a comfortable home life is my most important goal.

– ***comma splices and fused sentences***

Incorrect: On most days I had only enough money for bus fare, lunch was a luxury I could not afford.

Correct: On most days I had only enough money for bus fare. Lunch was a luxury I could not afford.

Incorrect: Living alone is pleasant still it can sometimes, I admit, have drawbacks.

Correct: Living alone is pleasant. Still it can sometimes, I admit, have drawbacks.

– ***mixed constructions***

Incorrect: In the employees manual, it says that everyone is entitled to equal pay for their work.

Correct: The employees manual says that everyone is entitled to equal pay for their work.

– ***lack of parallelism***

Incorrect: Three things are needed to give a good seminar: adequate preparation, a visual aid, and you should have strong nerves.

Correct: Three things are needed to give a good seminar: adequate preparation, a visual aid, and strong nerves.

Organization¹⁰

Logical Sequence and Connection of Ideas

Provide a focus by first writing a **summary statement**, called a **thesis statement** in an essay. The summary statement is the controlling element in a paper that helps the reader to stay on track. An unclear focus will show up quickly.

Typical Essay Arrangement for Informational Writing

A typical writing arrangement in essays or reports with an informative purpose is:

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH – captures the readers' attention

THESIS OR PURPOSE STATEMENT – states the central message of the essay; it is usually found at the end of the introductory paragraph.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – provides basic information that would help the reader understand the topic. It can be a stand-alone paragraph or be included in the introductory paragraph.

POINTS OF DISCUSSION (OR BODY) – presents the findings or discussion as set out in the thesis or purpose. Each finding can be a paragraph, with the number of paragraphs expanding to suit the requirements of the task. Instruct students to think of each paragraph as a shoe box, file folder, or whatever analogy works. Students label each paragraph for the reader using a **topic sentence**. They sort and file information in these "boxes."

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH - ends the essay by restating the thesis or reviewing the findings.

Language and Sentence Structure⁹

●● **concise language, absence of wordy phrases**

Wordy: The making of public policy is a difficult process.
We wondered what the effects of the changes would be to the program.
There are a number of items which need correcting.

_____ Concise: Making public policy is a difficult process.
We wondered about the effects of the changes to the program.
A number of items need correcting.

●● ***precise language, non-repetitive language choices***

Vague/
repetitive: Producers who use crop rotations as part of an overall
production plan can have an impact on the overall productivity
of their operations.

Precise: By using crop rotations as part of an overall management plan,
farmers can increase their operations' productivity by 25%.

●● ***appropriate comparisons***

Inappropriate: _____ Better farmers tend to generate higher incomes.

Appropriate: Farmers who use the latest management techniques tend
to generate higher incomes than the average Canadian
farm income, according to Statistics Canada.

●● ***language appropriate to audience***

●● **active language (where it best serves the sentence)**

Passive: When the experiments were completed by the scientists, it was discovered that amino acid supplementation resulted in an increased average daily gain for pigs during the grower period.

Active: When the scientists completed the experiments, they discovered that supplementing with amino acid increased the average daily gain for pigs during the grower period.

●● **absence of ambiguous pronouns**

Ambiguous: It is believed that temperature and moisture are important factors in grain storage.

Clear: Scientists who conducted a recent study believe that temperature and moisture are important factors in grain storage.

Also avoid: it has been found that
it has long been known that
it is a fact that
it is evident that
it is interesting to note that
it is noted that

●● **Unity: variety of sentence lengths and structures; transitional phrases; topic sentence**

Lacking unity: My past two summer positions have involved direct customer relations with a farm supply business. I effectively managed customer relationships and developed many new clients. I can transfer these skills to the sales position in your company. I worked as a farm hand after school for more than a year and I could use these skills in my dealings with your farm customers.

Unity: I have an extensive background in agriculture and sales which makes me an ideal candidate for your position. In my past two summer positions, I was involved in direct customer relations with a farm supply business. While there, I effectively managed customer relationships and developed many new clients. These are skills I can transfer to the sales position in your company. As well, I can offer your farm customers a bonus; I worked as a farm hand after school for more than a year.

●● ***gender-neutral language***

Instead of: Every lawyer has 10 minutes for his summation.

Try: All lawyers have 10 minutes for their summations.
Lawyers have 10 minutes for summations.
Every lawyer has 10 minutes for a summation.
Every lawyer has 10 minutes for his or her summation.

●● ***consistent voice/point of view***

Voice change: Everyone should purchase a lift ticket unless you plan to spend most of your time walking or crawling up a steep hill.

Consistent voice: Everyone should purchase a lift ticket unless he or she plans to spend most of his or her time walking or crawling up a steep hill.

OR

All skiers should purchase lift tickets unless they plan to spend most of their time walking or crawling up a steep hill.

●● **absence of jargon and buzzwords**

Use shorter version:

sufficient amount of -- enough
along the lines of -- like
at such time as -- when
at the present time -- now
at this point in time -- now
come to a conclusion -- conclude
despite the fact that -- although
due to the fact that -- because
during the time that -- while
fewer in number -- fewer
for the purpose of -- to, for
for the reason that -- because
give consideration to -- consider, examine
in close proximity to -- near
in excess of -- more than
in order to -- to
in terms of -- in
in the event that -- if
in the near future -- soon
in view of the fact that -- because, since
prior to -- before
reach a conclusion -- conclude
subsequent to -- after
the question as to -- whether
utilize or utilization -- use

Other vague words and phrases:

as to whether -- whether
being that or **being as** -- because
etc.
Firstly, secondly -- first, second.
Irregardless -- regardless
on account of -- because
plus -- and.
So as to -- to.
Try and -- try to

Delete redundant words:

adequate enough -- adequate (or enough)

advance planning -- planning

basic essentials -- basics (or essentials)

close proximity -- proximity

consensus of opinion -- consensus

cooperated together -- cooperated

future predictions -- predictions

green coloured -- green

joint cooperation -- cooperation

necessary requirement -- requirement

resemble in appearance -- resemble

twelve in number -- twelve

NUMBER USAGE¹⁰

- Numbers in the millions or higher should be written as a combination of numbers and words:
23 million *3.1 million*
- Spell out a number when it occurs at the beginning of a sentence:
Three hundred persons were expected.
- If the unit is represented by an abbreviation or a symbol, use numerals:
a 2.36 m high jump
or
three 5 L containers
- Sums of money are usually expressed in numerals:
\$5.98/m and *\$5*
In combination with metric units:
\$11.50/m² not *\$11.50/ square metre*
- C\$20 for Canadian dollars
US\$20 for American dollars
A\$20 for Australian dollars
- In general use arabic numerals instead of words in scientific and technical writing,
6 braces *61 amino acids*

but in some technical and all general writing, write out numbers *one* to *nine*
- Use arabic numerals followed by the per cent sign in scientific and technical writing,
5%
but in general writing, write out the word:
15 per cent

Appendix C

Peer Response and Evaluation Guide¹¹**Guidelines**

You are going to read and comment directly on a photocopy of a classmate's paper. Read the paper through carefully before making any comments. Then follow the guidelines below.

1. Consider the writer's topic, purpose and audience. Are they clearly indicated? Are they consistent? If not, ask the writer questions to help clarify these essential elements of writing.
2. Read the piece through once to see how it is organized. Are there any gaps in the development of the topic? Whenever possible, phrase your comments as questions, not judgements. ***If you think the structure needs to be revised significantly, skip to question 6 after answering this question.***
3. Are the ideas connected to each other smoothly and logically? ***If you think the structure needs to be revised significantly, skip to question 6 after answering this question.***
4. Do any sentences confuse you? If so, why? If you can't identify the error, ask the writer a question to help clarify the meaning.
5. Are there any problems with grammar, spelling or punctuation in this paper? If so, mark them, but do not correct them.
6. Decide on the paper's two most significant strengths. Identify these on the reader response form.
7. Fill out the rest of the *Reader Response Form*, telling the writer what you think the topic, audience and purpose of the paper are. Then identify any questions you have about the writer's intended meaning and suggest ways the writer could make the meaning clearer to the reader.

Reader Response Form

Reader's name _____ Date _____
Writer's name _____ Topic _____
Target audience _____ Writer's
purpose _____

1. What are the two most effective aspects of this paper?

2. What questions do you have about the paper? What parts are not clear?

3. What suggestions do you have to improve the next draft of this paper?

4. Please check the items that detract from the readability of this paper:
_____ sentence structure _____ wordiness
_____ grammar _____ vague /wrong word choice
_____ spelling _____ punctuation

Thank you for reading and responding to the paper. Please make any additional comments on the back of the sheet.