

## Tips for Working with ELL Writers

1. **When offering feedback, don't focus on grammatical errors alone.** Try to focus on the students' ideas first and then identify one or two issues impeding comprehension for the student to work on. Missing/misplaced articles (a, an, the) may be problematic, but they do not generally obstruct meaning. Find the issues preventing the student from communicating his/her meaning to readers, such as word order or verb tense, and have the student work on those first.
2. **Offer students the opportunity to revise and edit their work over multiple drafts.** This will provide them with the practice they may lack in completing academic assignments.
3. **In response to students' writing, try for comments that are clear and precise while also encouraging.** Requests like "explain" or "analyze" may be too vague. Try to refer to something specific in their writing: "What is the main idea of this paragraph? You need to state the main idea first and then proceed to develop your paragraph so that it follows up on that great idea."
4. **When creating and delivering assignments, identify key terms, phrases or instructions** (e.g. directions that ask students to "analyze" or "integrate"). Explain directions both verbally and in writing, and spell out the steps involved in the completion of the assignment.
5. **Offer examples of writing that successfully meet the criteria for your assignments.** Model to students how to draft and revise their writing as much as possible. You can, for example, edit one paragraph for them to have as a model and ask them to edit the rest of the paper.
6. **Understand that writing conventions are culturally constructed.** Western rhetoric is linear in nature, but your students may be from a culture that is parallel, digressive, or indirect in nature (see Kaplan, 1966 or the video, *Writing Across Borders*, available on YouTube).
7. **Incorporate less formal writing assignments into your course.** Balance the syllabus with journaling assignments, for example, where ELL students can write without worrying about being penalized for mechanical errors.
8. **Learn more about your ELL students' cultures, languages and educational experiences.** You will have students from the same area in the future, and the more you know about cultural conventions (such as writing style) and language, the more you will be able to help.
9. **Learn more about language, grammar, and style.** Having the vocabulary to discuss such issues with ELL students can be helpful in explaining errors.