

# *ONLINE RESPONSE HANDBOOK*

Western Washington University  
Writing Center

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## HANDBOOK

### PHILOSOPHY

Our online response method parallels our face-to-face pedagogy in that we primarily respond to higher order concerns. By emailing our comments at the end of a text, we avoid fixing writers' texts and making suggestions; instead, we feature reader response and guiding questions. To promote a sense of dialogue, we prompt turn-taking by positioning guiding questions at the ends of paragraphs. As in our face-to-face work, we respond as much to writers as we do to their drafts.

While some writing centers perceive online conferencing as inferior as face-to-face, we hold that neither is better—they're just different. Given that fully a third of our conferences now take place online, we're encouraged by the benefits of virtual response to writers as well as to online assistants.

Writers gain:

- Anonymity, especially useful for high anxiety writers.
- Easy access without scheduling.
- Written record of reader response.
- Agency to make revising decisions on their own.

Assistants gain:

- Time to reread and consider agenda priorities.
- Opportunity to revise language.
- Leisure to consult resources during conferences.
- Practice composing efficient written response (especially useful for future teachers.)

### PROTOCOL

1. Follow the Writing Center pedagogy; work global to local.
2. Respond to the draft in an end-of-text letter to the writer. Refer to parts of the draft by paragraph number where necessary.
3. Set priorities. Long responses can overwhelm, so keep responses brief.
4. Use upbeat language, but avoid dry or sarcastic humor—it rarely comes across online.
5. Explain and model strategies that writers can try themselves. Include links to other resources.
6. Interpret vague assignments and convey your assumptions in the response. Invite writers to respond with more information.

## ONLINE ASSISTANT DUTIES

### The Basic Routine

1. Check the Inbox—At the beginning of your shift, check the Inbox for drafts. If the Inbox has many drafts, check the “Daily Assignments” email for instructions on what drafts you are assigned to.

2. Select a Draft—Unless otherwise instructed, prioritize drafts according to the following guidelines:

- Respond to WWU students before non-WWU students.
- Respond to older drafts first.

3. Move Submission/Question—File the submission or question in the appropriate folder **before you respond** to a draft or question. Moving the draft at the beginning of your shift reduces the possibility of duplicate responses.

**Note on Moving Files:** To move a submission or question, highlight the file in the Inbox folder. Drag it to the appropriate folder (e.g., “Fall 04 Submissions”).

4. Notify Receptionist—After you have determined what online activity you will be engaged in, notify the Receptionist of your plans. If you have no online duties, let the Receptionist know that you are available to take drop-ins.

5. Complete SIS—Record your online session on an SIS card. Check to see if the writer is already in our file **before responding**, as the SIS will show what issues have been addressed in previous conferences. If the writer is new to the Writing Center, fill out a new card with the submission information and drop it in the basket on the reception desk.

**Note on SIS Cards:** Underreported online sessions create large problems with Writing Center statistics and funding. This is especially problematic since a third of Writing Center activities are conducted online.

6. Respond to Draft—Open the message, read the draft, and compose a response.

**Note on Attachments:** For virus protection, we prefer not to open drafts submitted in attached files. If attachments are unavoidable (for example, if the Writing Center’s web submission form is down) open the attachment on a lab computer.

7. Move Response/Answer—File your response or answer in the appropriate folder after you send it.  
(See “Note on Moving Files” in Step 3.)

## Online Conferences: What to Expect

Conference Timeline—Response timelines vary according to demand. At peak times, assistants should expect to respond to two drafts in a shift wherever possible. In short conferences, time management becomes critical, so try to follow these guidelines.

TASK	LEISURE SESSION	POWER SESSION
Print and read draft	10 minutes	5 minutes
Set priorities and plan	10 minutes	5 minutes
Compose	22 minutes	10 minutes
Proofread (don't omit this step!)	5 minutes	3 minutes
Complete paperwork	3 minutes	3 minutes

Composing Responses—As with face-to-face conferences, there is no one-size-fits-all response method. But we have found that using the following strategies stays truest to our face-to-face pedagogical ideals.

(For rationale, see “More Talk, Less Fix” in the Articles section.)

- **Introduce self; identify the paper and the issues you will address.** (5%)  
(i.e., “Hi X; it’s Y here from the Writing Center, and I got to read your paper on fairy tales. I notice you ask questions about both thesis and organization, so I’ll be responding to primarily to the overall message and connections in your piece.”)
- **Identify strengths.** (10%)  
(i.e., “I notice you have a strong introduction. It really piqued my curiosity about your topic and made me want to read more.”)
- **Describe the draft.** (20%)  
(i.e., “You indicated that one of your questions concerns whether your thesis is coming across. I think that’s a legitimate concern because I didn’t see any sentence that I could identify as your thesis.”)
- **Inform writer of your response/needs as a reader.** (30%)  
(i.e., “Not seeing any one sentence that I could identify as your thesis kept me feeling a little lost till the end, where I thought I noticed a “thesisy” kind of sentence in your conclusion. That sentence was so helpful to my understanding of your piece that, as a reader, I wanted that information sooner.”)

*(Continued)*

- **Perception check/Ask questions.** (30%)  
(i.e., “From the sentence at the end, then, I got the idea that you want to say that traditional fairy tales reinforce gender stereotypes. Am I close? How could you clue in your reader earlier to this idea? In what ways could you include hints in your thesis about **how** these tales reinforce stereotypes?”)
- **Close response.** (5%)  
(i.e., “Well, I hope these comments help you as you prepare your portfolio. My online colleagues and I would be happy to receive another submission from you if you need another draft read.”)

### **Other Online Duties**

Responding to Queries—Occasionally, our inbox contains grammar questions or other writing queries. Using a handbook or other Center resources, do your best to answer these. If you run across a query that you can’t answer, inform a Coordinator immediately.

Archiving Files—You may be asked to help archive the previous quarter’s online activity by changing submissions and responses into text files. (See Appendix B for archiving instructions.)

Contributing to Blackboard—Regularly check the “Online Response” thread in the “Discussion” section of Blackboard. When trainees post practices, respond to those practices as they are submitted. When pedagogical or logistical questions arise for you, please post those of general interest to the online staff.

Best Practices Pieces—In the hopes of gathering an enriched bag-o-tricks we can all use in our responses, online assistants should plan to write up at least one favorite online response strategy. As you can see from those included in the “Articles” section of this handbook, these pieces typically describe the technique, give the rationale for using it, and explain the technique’s benefit to writers. Typically spring is our slowest online quarter, so plan to compose our BP piece after we’ve got fall and winter under our belts.

### **Staff Development Activities**

In addition to conferencing and other online duties, all online assistants can expect to participate in a quarterly staff development session devoted to online work. This session will address a particularly hot topic in online response (please suggest a topic if you have one). Typically, the session also includes a group assessment process where each online assistant brings their own online transcript. The assessment involves a read-around of the transcripts and a debriefing session where we make group observations of strengths and goals. Assistants who have unavoidable schedule conflicts with the Staff Development activity should contact the Student Coordinator for alternate SD work.

<b>TRAINING SYLLABUS</b>	
TIMELINE	ACTIVITY
<p>SESSION ONE (One session generally equals one shift.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the <i>Blackboard</i> “Online Response” thread (under “Discussion Board”) for messages or announcements.</li> <li>• Read the “Handbook” section of the notebook (pages 2-5).</li> <li>• Explore the Writing Center Website.</li> <li>• <b>Submit a piece of your own writing</b> through the “Send Us a Draft” section of our website. The writing can be something you are currently working on, or something from a previous quarter.</li> <li>• Practice logging on to <i>Outlook</i>, our email program (See page 35).</li> <li>• While in <i>Outlook</i>, peruse responses from the previous quarter’s file.</li> </ul>
<p>SESSION TWO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check <i>Blackboard</i> and <i>Outlook</i> inbox for messages or announcements.</li> <li>• Write a short journal piece (2-3 paragraphs) about how the OWL response you received affected you. What worked well? What was confusing? What was your emotional response? Submit this to <i>Blackboard</i> (anonymously, if you wish).</li> <li>• Read the “Articles” section of the handbook (pages 8-21).</li> </ul>
<p>SESSION THREE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check <i>Blackboard</i> and <i>Outlook</i> inbox for messages or announcements.</li> <li>• Read the first practice draft (page 22) and compose a response.</li> <li>• Post your response to the Blackboard Online Response Group as assigned by the coordinator. (See coordinator if you don’t have a group.)</li> </ul>

SESSION FOUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check <i>Blackboard</i> and <i>Outlook</i> inbox for messages or announcements.</li> <li>• Read previous practice responses to the first draft (pages 30-31) and feedback from senior assistants (pages 32-33).</li> <li>• Check your Blackboard Online Response Group for senior online assistants' responses to your practice.</li> <li>• Using the information you glean in the steps above, revise your practice response to the first draft.</li> <li>• Post your revised practice to your Blackboard Online Response Group.</li> </ul>
SESSION FIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the <i>Blackboard</i> and <i>Outlook</i> inbox for messages or announcements.</li> <li>• Read the second practice draft (page 27) and compose a response.</li> <li>• Post your response to to your Blackboard Online Response Group.</li> </ul>
SESSION SIX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the <i>Blackboard</i> and <i>Outlook</i> inbox for messages or announcements.</li> <li>• Read previous practice responses to the second draft (page 34) and the feedback for your response posted on <i>Blackboard</i>.</li> <li>• Keeping in mind your peers' suggestions, revise your response to the second practice draft.</li> <li>• Post your revised response to to your Blackboard Online Response Group.</li> </ul>
SESSION SEVEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the <i>Blackboard</i> and <i>Outlook</i> inbox for messages or announcements.</li> <li>• Check with the Training Coordinator or WC Coordinator about your activities for this session. You will be advised when to begin online response.</li> </ul>



**ARTICLE A: MORE TALK, LESS FIX:  
TRAINING TUTORS IN A FACILITATIVE ONLINE RESPONSE PEDAGOGY**

By Roberta R. Buck and David Shumway  
Western Washington University

Writing centers have for years endured an uneasy relationship with technology. Part of our uneasiness probably results from not understanding how technology works or how to use it. But our biggest discomfort stems from a sense that at bottom technology, particularly asynchronous online response to paper submissions, violates the very foundation of writing center philosophy: the drop-off nature of online services seems at odds with our belief that knowledge is socially constructed, and the interlinear nature of much online response seems to revive the remediation model we reject. Incorporating technology into our work seems less a step forward than a step back, returning us to a model of writing center work that we'd frankly like to shed and leaving us to wonder if online response doesn't undermine the epistemological and philosophical tenets we hold most dear.

On the face of it, the online medium seems to preclude talking and promote fixing, reducing writing centers to the much-ballyhooed drop off service ("Dropping Off Papers"). Joanna Castner uses a "stab in the dark" metaphor to describe how writers and advisors seem to miss each other completely in online conferencing. Observing that few writers and their advisors end up in two-way exchanges over drafts and responses, she attributes the main reason for this "less-talk" pedagogy as the time delay inherent in the asynchronicity of responses (121). Some writing centers have found other ways to include dialogue after the fact, requiring face-to-face follow-ups or phone conversations. But few have found ways to establish a dialogic give-and-take in asynchronous sessions themselves.

In addition to "less-talk," online response seems inherently "more-fix." Online response transcripts certainly give credence to that charge, including those used as examples in Barbara Monroe's revealing article "The Look-and-Feel of the OWL Conference." The examples she includes feature intertextual comments, which promote a focus on lower (or later) order concerns and inspire tinkering, what in face-to-face work would constitute the ultimate faux pas – interrupting writers as they read aloud in order to red-ink their drafts. When Barbara Kossman circulated a draft to online writing centers, she noted that even when her responders did manage a focus on higher order concerns (HOCs), the intertextual nature of the commentary seemed to invite a level of prescriptive advice that she found stultifying as she considered how to revise (4). In online response, then, responders often shift to a very un-writing-centered, "more-fix" pedagogy, one marked by attending to local rather than global and by suggesting or directing rather than asking.

If this "less-talk, more-fix" pedagogy is an evil inherent to the technology itself, writing centers must choose their response to the perceived conflict between philosophy

and technology. Those who can't bear conflict choose to ignore the mismatch between their face-to-face practice and their online one, the head-in-the-sand approach. Those who believe technology is indispensable recommend revising philosophy to accommodate technology, the doormat approach. Those who believe philosophy is incontrovertible suggest shaping up technology – or shipping it out, the my-way-or-highway approach. Those who believe in finding a happy middle ground recommend compromising some both on philosophy and technology, the meet-in-the-middle approach.

We at Western Washington University suggest an alternate response to the perceived conflict – to transcend it; in other words, we believe writing centers can rise above the conflict altogether. For you see, the medium does not prescribe the “less-talk, more-fix” pedagogy at all; no, the problem is not the technology – the problem is how we're using it. Online response can mirror face-to-face response, promoting dialogue internal to writers and eliciting solutions residing within them. Instructing online assistants in a facilitative pedagogy consistent with our face-to-face work retains the dialogic and collaborative aspects of conferencing that writing centers – and the writers who use us – so value.

### Our Online Context

Our Writing Center began its online services in 1996 with a Web site advertising our face-to-face services and linking to writers' resources. At first we hadn't adequate technology to receive drafts at all (we boasted Apple IIEs when our Web site debuted!), but even after our equipment improved enough in 1998 to open for online submissions, our technology supported nothing more complex than email response. In planning for our online response premiere, we were aware that it posed all the challenges of face-to-face response along with a couple of extras to boot – one posed by the medium and one posed by the asynchronicity. Fortunately, the two of us had experience with the latter challenge, because in addition to our writing assistant work, we had also been writing fellows, peer readers who responded to student drafts in writing. Although neither of us had used an electronic medium for such response, we both had experience ameliorating the challenges created by not having writers in the room with us when we responded.

To offset the seductive influence inherent in physically controlling writers' texts, we wanted a pedagogy that addressed global issues in whole texts, not one that altered or fixed them. So we decided to respond holistically in separate email letters, leaving writers' drafts intact and creating new texts of our own. To offset the challenge posed by distance, the absence of non-verbal cues or traditional dialogic exchange, we wanted a pedagogy that established rapport and that engaged writers in an alternate type of dialogue – an internal one. So we decided to respond in ways that not only established connections with writers and acknowledged their strengths prominently, but more importantly promoted inquiry, prompting writers to answer our questions, to pose more for themselves, and to answer themselves again and again as they reconsidered their texts. In short, we knew we needed a facilitative pedagogy.

## The Facilitative Pedagogy Explained

After responding to thirty or so drafts, we became aware that the majority of our responses consisted of three basic elements – observations, reader reactions, and guiding questions. Further examination quickly revealed that all three of these components seemed to be working together to achieve a single goal, namely to reproduce in our online responses the stronger elements of our face-to-face pedagogy. We were quick to realize how invaluable a carefully articulated method of response could be in training new writing assistants, and so we threw ourselves into making explicit the function and form of the response elements and the rationale for using them. In doing so, we noticed that while the function of the describe-react-question elements was to address the perceived needs of writers' texts, the form of these elements targeted the affective needs of the writers themselves, and we've since found it helpful to explain the components of our response model in terms of their text-based function and their writer-based form.

The first component of our online pedagogy, the observation, serves the text-based function of identifying specific draft aspects writing assistants wish to address. In contrast to intertextual responses, our end comment responses are read independently of the submissions they are based on, so writers read responses without the benefit of their original texts to provide context. Writing assistants may therefore have difficulty guaranteeing that writers are on the same page as they are. Observations are key in alleviating the contextual challenges presented by the end comment format, as they serve as a sort of "pointing finger" that can be used to reference specific areas of writers' texts. This referencing effect can be most easily achieved by presenting observations as declarative statements about specific areas of drafts' content: "The first part of your draft seems primarily concerned with Kurosawa's place in Japanese cinema." This same effect can be achieved with "I notice" statements, for example, "I noticed that the second part of your draft discusses Ozu's role." In addition to providing context for writing assistants' comments, observations also function in a secondary capacity as indirect perception checks. When composing their responses, writing assistants usually assume that their observations will be congruent with writers' understandings of their drafts' contents, but this assumption occasionally proves false. Writers may sometimes view the ideas presented in their drafts in ways that radically differ from those represented by writing assistants' observations. Incongruities between writers' intended meanings and those observed by writing assistants can be of great use, however, as these contrasts can help writers to see what they have or haven't said and to reexamine mismatches.

In addition to the text-based function of providing context, observations also serve an important writer-based function, as their presentation establishes comfortable working relationships between writers and writing assistants. We often take the amount of non-verbal communication inherent in face-to-face conferences for granted, and nowhere is the importance of these non-verbal cues more obvious than in the affective vacuum of asynchronous response. Without our reassuring smiles to assuage writers'

anxieties and insecurities, our words can often appear harsher than we mean them to, and so we must frame our observations using language that is neutral. With this in mind, it is important to note that observations call attention to the communicative function of given passages – they do not pass judgment on writers’ abilities to express given meanings through their texts. Statements such as, “I notice that only the second paragraph discusses Kurosawa’s relationship with Mifune,” would therefore be effective, while, “You did not relate the information on Mifune to your thesis,” would not.

After highlighting areas to be discussed, writing assistants then present any comments or concerns regarding these textual aspects in the form of reader reactions. By presenting how drafts impact writing assistants as readers, reactions thereby illustrate how generalized audiences will receive writers’ texts and thus how thoroughly drafts communicate writers’ intended meanings. Reaction statements such as, “As a reader, I had trouble understanding the contrasting importance of Kurosawa and Ozu in Japanese cinema,” help writers understand how audiences will perceive their work and motivate them to revise with their readers in mind. Reactions are not used exclusively to prompt revision in unclear or confusing parts; they may also be used with equal regularity to comment on aspects of writing that responders consider particularly well written or entertaining. Reassuring reaction statements such as, “I love your description of Kurosawa’s use of composition – you make it so easy for me to imagine each scene you describe,” motivate writers to highlight or expand areas that responders enjoy.

As with observations, the language used to present reactions is of great importance in addressing writers’ affective needs, as carelessly worded reactions can easily seem evaluative or critical of writers’ abilities. Oddly, the shift away from writers to their texts actually allows responders to focus on writers’ needs, because by highlighting the reader-text relationship and leaving writers out of the equation entirely, our reactions are easier on writers’ egos. Presenting reactions in terms of our own abilities to discern intended meanings shifts the responsibility for confusion or misunderstanding away from writers and avoids any sort of implicit criticism of their abilities. The source of reader reactions can then be ascribed to drafts, not to writers, by describing the role particular textual aspects play in producing the reactions. One of the easiest ways to frame reader-text reactions is to use the phrase “as a reader”; for example, “As a reader, I get the impression that Ozu and Kurosawa represent the respective Eastern and Western aspects of Japanese cinema, but since I don’t see a statement like this in the text, I feel like I have to work really hard to make this connection.” Although the difference between reactions directed at writers or their texts may seem subtle at first, one can see how reactions directed at writers seem to blame them: “You seem to be saying that Ozu and Kurosawa represent the respective Eastern and Western aspects of Japanese cinema, but you don’t make a statement like this anywhere in your paper.” While there is still no judgment present in such responses, one can easily see how writers may interpret them as accusations in the affective vacuum of asynchronous response.

Reader reactions are followed by the third and final component of our pedagogy, the guiding question, an element more crucial than any other to the dialogic nature of

our response method. Now that responders have identified aspects for revision (in observations) and provided writers with the motivation for revising (in reader reactions), it is time for writers to reenter the dialogue and decide how best to approach the revision process. Guiding questions serve the text-based function of prompting writers to reenter the discussion, equipping them with a rough sense of how to meet the communicative needs of the audience, and providing writers with starting points from which to begin reflecting on their revisions. Questions such as, “How can you make explicit for your readers Ozu’s and Kurosawa’s roles and identify the connection between them?” and, “How does the information on Mifune relate to the roles of Ozu and Kurosawa in Japanese cinema?” provide writers with points to consider when beginning internal dialogues on how best to revise. For dialogic purposes, it is thus important that guiding questions be placed at the ends of paragraphs, as following these questions with any other statements is the online equivalent of interrupting writers as soon as they begin to speak.

As in observations and reader reactions, language plays a crucial role in composing guiding questions. Statements, while providing explicit direction for revision, effectively disempower writers by shutting them out of any sort of dialogue regarding their texts. Questions, on the other hand, transfer complete control of the revision process to writers, thus allowing them to retain ownership of their drafts and their revisions. Not all questions promote dialogue and ownership with equal success, however. Guiding questions must lead writers to give their drafts considerable thought, and so they must be questions that cannot be answered simply “yes” or “no.” Guiding questions must therefore be as open-ended as possible, and we find “how” or “what” questions particularly effective in this regard. In addition to providing prompts for reflection and revision, guiding questions serve the less obvious but still important function of building confidence. With questions, writing assistants signal confidence in writers’ abilities to address the questions in revising and empower writers with the ability to make all decisions regarding how best to meet readers’ needs.

### Training Writing Assistants in our Pedagogy

With our newly discovered pedagogy articulated, we then had to find a way to teach writing assistants to use it. We recognized early that our training course did not include pedagogy appropriate to written response, and since we elected not to train all writing assistants in online techniques, we chose not to alter our classroom curriculum. Instead, we selected for online work those assistants who were already seasoned in face-to-face conferencing, comfortable in the online medium, and interested in adding to their pedagogical repertoire. We found that written response especially appeals to those among our staff who intend to become educators, because they perceive particular benefits in quickly reading, assessing, and composing – skills they are certain to use again in the classroom.

At the start of every quarter when demand is low, new online assistants complete a training curriculum on their own, beginning with reading our *Online Response Handbook*. (Experienced assistants review the *Handbook* and its revisions

at the start of each academic year.) The *Handbook's* first section overviews our philosophy, response principles, procedures, and training protocol. In addition to the logistics of email account management, this section gives online responders a sense of how to manage the ideal fifty minutes allotted for response – fifteen minutes for reading, five for diagnosing and choosing priorities, twenty-five for composing, and five for proofreading. Additionally, this section gives responders a sense of the response sequence – introduce self, identify strengths, describe-respond-question (for each identified priority), and close.

The next section of the *Handbook* presents two articles that add theoretical support to the pedagogy presented. The first of two articles, “The Rhetoric of Written Response,” by Rick Leahy, presents “distant response” (2) strategies that ameliorate the fix-it, directive tendencies we’re tempted to use when writers are not present. The second article, “A Facilitative Method for Online Response,” written in-house by David Shumway, makes our own facilitative pedagogy explicit, includes our rationale for using it, and shows examples of the pedagogy in action.

Once new online assistants have the theoretical background, they begin composing practice responses to the *Handbook's* sample drafts. Not pressed by time or the ethos of real writers, new responders learn to read drafts quickly, to set reasonable priorities, and to use the pedagogy for addressing strengths and concerns. After they have composed responses, they refer to the back of the *Handbook*, where they can read several other sample practices, experienced assistants’ responses to the samples, and the real responses sent to the authors. With this new input in mind, new staff members revise their responses until they feel satisfied.

Next, new assistants workshop their responses with the entire online staff. As experienced staff members have downtime, they respond. Casting themselves as writers-turned-readers, they identify effective parts of responses and offer their reactions to confusing elements – all the while modeling our online pedagogy. Online response to practices gives information on how writers would receive the feedback and allows a chance to revise based on online response. New assistants complete this practice-revise-workshop-revise process with at least two sample drafts.

### Assessing Writing Assistants’ Response Pedagogy

Training complete, new responders join the ranks. After each quarter’s work, the online staff participates in formative assessments. Our assessment strategy has evolved into one that mirrors our pedagogy. We meet as a team, bringing response transcripts to read aloud. First, we respond to each other with descriptive statements, such as, “I notice your opening paragraph establishes common ground with the writer,” or, “I notice that your paragraphs end with statements.” Once we’ve described each response, we react to it: “If I got this response, I would be delighted to know that you also took this class – I would feel like I was in good hands,” or, “If I got this response, I might overlook the questions in the middle of the paragraph because I might have forgotten them by the time I get to the end.”

Often observations and reader reactions are enough to prompt future goals, but if not, we pose questions: "How might you rearrange the paragraphs to make the questions in them more prominent to writers?" or, "If you decided to shorten this response, which revision issue would you omit?" Such questions have elicited such worthy goals as rearranging responses to follow the pedagogy more closely or selecting priority revision issues for writers. Chances are we'll steal from each other – we like how one establishes rapport, we like how another acknowledges strengths, and we like how yet another phrases questions. The beauty of collaborative assessment is that we not only learn from each other's strengths and goals, we also orally rehearse the pedagogy (describe, react, question).

### Implications

Even though we've chosen to rise above the perceived conflict between technology and philosophy, we acknowledge that online response differs from face-to-face response; we're not foolish enough to suggest that technology can or should replace what we've always done best. That said, though, we believe technology is here to stay in writing centers, and we do not buy into the alarmist view that suggests that, because there's some bad online pedagogy in use, writing centers should rethink using the online medium – there's bad face-to-face pedagogy out there, too. As Web site authors, writing centers are not victims of technology, nor are they victims to any conflicts (perceived or real) between its limitations and our ideals. Writing centers planning their entry into the online medium will want to carefully exert their own "rhetorical agency" (Werder), reflectively constructing an online pedagogy that fits the technology they have – and one that remains consistent with their philosophies, retaining the best features of what they do face-to-face.

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**ARTICLE B: ONLINE WRITING INSTRUCTION IN  
ASYNCHRONOUS ENVIRONMENTS**

Online writing instruction in asynchronous environments

Preparing educators for online writing instruction: principles and processes, by Hewett and Ehmann, pp.67-88

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**BEST PRACTICES A: INCLUDING AN OVERVIEW STATEMENT**

By Megan Riddle  
Spring 2002

**Technique:** The use of an introductory paragraph that includes an explanation of the time constraints OWLers face and a brief statement about what the response will address. This paragraph might read something like the following:

Hi. This is XXX from the WC and I just had the opportunity to read your draft about \_\_\_\_\_. Because of time constraints, I can only address some of the issues presented in your essay. After looking at your concerns and reading through your draft, I think it would be most beneficial to discuss \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Rationale:** First, the reference to a time limit serves as a disclaimer and makes clear the fact that we can't "fix," or even bring up, every issue the draft presents. Also, by stating in the final sentence what the response will address, we create a thesis statement for our own response, thus modeling good writing and helping to focus our own work.

**Effect on writer:** This technique serves a variety of purposes. For example, it teaches writers how to use our language of revision. Sometimes writers come to the WC asking for "grammar help" because they don't know what else to say. By stating what we will be addressing in the response—for example, thesis clarity or transitions—we might be able to increase their "revision vocabulary." Writers will also understand the purpose of the responses better if we clarify what issues we will deal with in the introduction. They may be better able to integrate the questions we incorporate later if they have a clear understanding of the issues we are trying to address. Finally, if the writers realize we cannot address every problem in the draft, maybe they will be more inclined to continue revising on their own and not just suppose that we have covered every issue.

**BEST PRACTICES B: USING SPECIFIC EXAMPLES**

By Tiffany Clevenger  
Spring 2002

**Description:**

Quoting the writer's paper in your response is an effective way to compliment the writer in the beginning paragraph of your response. The best compliments sound sincere because they are exact and detailed. If I say to a student that her paper "has very nice transitions," the writer may not believe me until I give a specific example. So to compliment her on her transitions, I might write the following.

Your paper is easy to follow because you use effective transitions. For example, in the second paragraph you write: 'Pigeons aren't the only birds who mate for life; swans do too.' In this one sentence, you conclude one section of your paper (on pigeons) and take me smoothly introduce the next (swans). Great job!

Using specific examples can be an effective way to transition from something the writer is doing well to something the writer needs to work on. For example, if a draft typically lacks transitions but the writer has included at least one good one, I will use the good one as an example of what she can do more. I might say

You have included a very effective transition statement between paragraphs four and five: "Pigeons aren't...; swans do to." This sentence concludes one idea, introduces the next, and shows the connection between them. In fact, this transition was so effective in bridging ideas that I wanted to see more of them. How could you employ this same strategy to transition between your thesis paragraph and the body of your paper?

**Rationale:**

The main reason for using specific examples from learners' papers is that they tell writers precisely where the strengths and gaps are located. If my response doesn't refer to a draft in a specific way, the writer may have a difficult time applying my response. The writer may think I didn't read the draft thoroughly or get frustrated trying to revise using a response she doesn't understand. Locating specific examples helps online assistants examine drafts closely and avoid inaccurate readings or vague responses.

**Effects:**

Targeting specific pieces of text give a writer some direction as to where to take her paper. The writer gains a clear sense of how her readers may struggle with specific sections of her texts.

*(Continued)*

For instance, if I respond more generally, the writer may not know where or what I'm struggling with.

Vague: "As a reader, I would have liked to have seen a link between all of your main points and the thesis."

Specific: "As a reader, I had difficulty understanding how the idea in paragraph four (summary of idea) related to the idea in paragraph five (summary of idea) and how both related to your thesis (summary of thesis)."

Specific citations of strength also give the writer a better sense of where the text is working well for me as a reader.

**BEST PRACTICES C: KEEPING IT SIMPLE**

By Peter Moe  
Spring 2005

Hi New OWLers!

Looking back on my three years OWLing, one big piece of advice I would have for newbies is to keep it simple. Just like with face to face conferencing, sometimes there is the temptation in OWLing that you have to somehow “fix” everything about the paper – which we all know is impossible. I found this out during my first few OWL drafts as I was totally overwhelmed thinking about all things I felt I had to cover in a 500 word response. Soon my responses began to grow (the longest ballooned to a mammoth 900 words!). But talking to a fellow LA, he told me about how he is so happy when he can keep his response *under* 500 words. He inspired me to try to keep my responses shorter.

So, how do you keep OWL responses manageable? Personally, I approach OWLing similar to a face to face conference. First, I make an agenda of items (either directly named by the writer or of my own persuasion) I would like to address in my response. Then I start typing. As the response grows, I watch the word count, trying to cover the two or three main items on my list. When I begin to approach 500 words or so, I start to wrap things up. Granted, sometimes my response will address three topics but there are still four left on the list, but the three I did get to were the most important from my agenda.

Trying to keep responses shorter means you may have to accept not addressing everything you feel should be tackled, but that feeling is one of the bedrock values of Writing Center work. There are many reasons I try to keep my responses short, most of which focus on the writer. If a response gets too long (like my infamous 900 word response) I think it runs the risk of totally overwhelming the writer. I think many writers, upon receiving a three-four page reply to their paper, might think, “Wow, my paper must be really bad to warrant such a long response.” I don’t want to send that discouraging message to writers! Also, keeping responses short, I think, encourages a “hands off” OWL response. Too long a response can start to flirt with taking the ownership of the paper away from the writer, leaving the writer no room to revise his/her own writing. And, perhaps the most practical reason to keep responses short – who has the time to write 900 word responses?

In a nutshell, my advice to new OWLers is to pick the two or three main issues you would like to address in your response and run with it. Keep the response short and simple, not tackling every conceivable thing you can think of, and I think your OWLing practice will benefit.

Welcome to the Parliament of OWLers!

Peter

## BEST PRACTICES D: SOME IDEAS ON PLAY

By Jen Laird  
Spring 2005

To New OWLers: Some ideas on play

Creating a friendly and personal voice online is one of the biggest difficulties I have heard OWLers mention. We use email and instant messenger for some of our most informal and bantering writing, yet online responses are supposed to carry an air of professionalism. But how can we keep a personal voice in our responses without sounding stiff?

I spent much of my last year at the Writing Center considering how playful approaches to our work can influence conferencing and our atmosphere. I also spent a good deal of time pondering how online strategies influence face-to-face conferences, and vice versa. So it only seems natural to consider how playful strategies in conferencing can carry into an approachable voice in online work. Here are a few thoughts:

### **Connect Personally:**

This may seem obvious, but I've found it useful both for myself and hopefully for the writer to explain my personal reaction or experience to a topic. As a writer, I think it's always interesting to know the responder's interest in a subject, but more importantly, I think voicing that connection helps me, as a responder, to be enthusiastic about a draft. No doubt this enthusiasm carries over throughout the response.

### **Check in:**

Throughout my responses, I try to ask the writer if my explanations are clear. While I know the questions themselves will ultimately be left unanswered, I hope that they contribute to an online dialogue. When explaining a strategy or rationale, I often ask "Does that make sense?" or "How does that sound to you?"

### **Describe Visual strategies:**

There are many playful strategies that we have the potential to use in face-to-face conferences, and I don't see why we can't use them online as well! Of course, the main reason is probably that most of us won't try out an unfamiliar strategy unless we are walked through it. Even so, some of our text-free strategies can translate quite well online, and others need just a little modification. For example, I often suggest using highlighters and post-its when it comes to organization; or, when a writer is stuck on their thesis, I might suggest setting aside the text and drawing for a few minutes. I have no way of knowing how successful these explanations are, but even if writers don't use them on the particular draft, I'm guessing the strategies make an impact somewhere along the way.

*(Continued)*

**Role-play:**

This is one of my favorite playful strategies because it allows me to concentrate on an important issue (perhaps missing information, or an unconvincing argument) without dictating the content. For example, I might say: “Imagine you are the president of Portugal. What additional information do you need to be convinced by this plan?”

**Give thesis examples:**

Over the past few years, I have seen OWLers model many different kinds of theses. My favorites, however, are the ones that use funny or inconsequential components to illustrate a strong thesis. I suggest taking a look back in the archives, but one might go something like: “The environmentally destructive system that built up the country’s hula-hooping was primarily created by bunny rabbits and orange peels.”

On that note, welcome to OWLing and keep playing!

Jen

## PRACTICES

### PRACTICE DRAFT #1

Name: JUSTIN

Class: English 101

Paper title: Conflict Narrative

Assignment description: Write a conflict narrative with cultural analysis and historical analysis.

Question: Any feedback is good feedback

"If You Think that's Bad, Let me Tell you about my First Job"

Sweat dripped down my face and heat waves penetrated my eyes with a fire that made me squint. It may have been cold outside, but it felt like the desert in here. Dust circled up from the floor and sweat slid down into my eyes forcing me to pull my greasy gloves off my hands. I cleaned the sweat from my brow and wiped it off my eyes. Another pale of dirt was full and with a sigh of relief I picked the garbage can up to take it to the dumpster. It seemed that every time I lifted that can, it got heavier, and heavier. I walked outside into the cool air to dump the garbage into the dumpster. I stayed outside just long enough to cool down, then I headed back inside to fill another can full of dirt, dust, and metal flakes. Welcome to my first job.

An integral part of every teenagers life is the pursuit of a job, the keeping of a job, and eventually, quitting a job. This first employment opportunity is one that will forever scar a teenager's memory as one of the worst and most despicable jobs that one could ever imagine. Their children will hear stories of that infamous job in all its horror and glory. Everyone has a different story of that initial place of employment, whether it be flipping burgers at McDonald's or bagging groceries at Safeway. Whatever the case may be, the story is often the same, "My boss hates me," and "You wouldn't believe what they make me do there." The problem with work is that you stay there as long as you possibly can, then you quit. The decisions we make in deciding on a job and ultimately terminating it are important ones. They reflect who we are and what we plan to be. The work ethic and perseverance during that first job will forever shape and mold the way we approach work and life.

One major problem with obtaining that first job is the realization that you are growing up. From the time you are born, your parents baby you whenever they can and their whole world revolves around you and your problems. This cycle continues on for as long as it can until your parents finally snap and force you to grow up. For some of us it took longer than others did, and for some, it still hasn't happened.

For about half of my high school experience I had managed to weasel my way out of getting a job. Of course I had various, one time, jobs which included mowing lawns and babysitting, but I never had a real, get a paycheck, punch a clock, kind of job. I mainly found joy in mooching off my parents, however as my junior year of high school approached reality set in and my parents got sick of my laziness. They presented me with a generous offer. Get a job or lose my car. I didn't have a nice car, but I would have done anything to keep it. At first I thought how unreasonable my parents were. They had babied me this long, why couldn't they just do it for a few more years? Both my parents however had worked during high school and my dad had worked prior to that as a paperboy. With all their work experience they could not fathom why I would not want a job. So, with all that parental pressure, I chose to go in search of employment. Pizza Hut and Safeway were among my top choices, but their restricting hours and non-flexible schedules deterred me from pursuing them further. Sports, school, and other commitments also hindered my search. Then, out of nowhere, a light shined down upon my quest and granted me a way out. My Uncle Frank offered me a job at the heat treating plant where he worked. He promised me more money, flexible hours, and the ability to come and go as I please. If I had too much homework, he wouldn't make me work. Even commitments like girlfriends and family came before work. But, as all great deals are, it may have been too good to be true.

I started work on a cold October afternoon. It was about 40 degrees outside and pillows of steam could be seen coming out of vents alongside the building. The building structure was made out of aluminum siding and an aluminum roof. The side wall panels had once been painted green, but now resembled a faded color of broccoli soup. Along the front of the building was a garage style sliding aluminum door that was halfway open. Heat waves crawled out through the open door and were emitted into the chilly October air. The loud hum of machinery could be heard in the distance and the clank of forklift forks banging on the ground came from inside. I turned the corner into the building and my hands, that had once become numb from the cold, were instantly warmed up by the heat generated from inside. Flames could be seen in every direction and when I walked too close to a furnace the heat struck me hard enough that I had to turn my head to shield my eyes from the searing heat waves. I walked quickly over to my Uncle's office to avoid anymore contacts with the heat demons and told him that I was here for work.

After about 15 minutes of talking with my uncle he was ready to put me to work. He walked me through a few of the different duties I would have over the unforeseeable future. First, cleaning one of the most disgusting bathrooms that I have ever set foot in and washing both of the delivery trucks twice a week. My third and final duty was to sweep every square inch of the football field sized, dirty, dusty, and grimy plant floor. I was handed a broom, a dustpan, and small waste can and told to go to work. I spent most of the winter months and on into spring toiling and sweating trying to get that place clean. Sadly, a great majority of those hours were spent behind hot furnaces scraping dirt and metal flakes out from corners. My body was beginning to ache and I was tired of



working there. The decision had been made. At the end of the summer I was going to quit. I just had to manage to get through the summer months.

When the outside temperature rose so did the temperature inside the heat treating plant. The heat was so unbearable that most of the workers, including myself, stayed outside, sat in the shade, and talked about life. It was during these talks that I gained one of my most memorable life experiences. Their stories reflected the way I now view life and I realized the steps that I must take to succeed. All of the workers came from such different worlds and their stories reflected their lives. There was John, the retired navy officer who had a flair for embellishment, a yearning for his hometown in Wisconsin, and a love of the Green Bay Packers. Then there was Vaai and Matt, both of who were truly Samoan and could barely speak English, but who were excellent welders. Along that same line of non-English speaking people was Nikolay, our electrician. Nikolay had just moved here from Russia and was striving to learn American language and culture. There was also Dave, our technical expert, who was convinced that Microsoft and the military were working together to secretly take over the Internet. We also had one woman in the crowd, Linda. She was our savior who did the books, handled the phones, and was our spokesperson for raises. Linda was otherwise known as the secretary. Last, but not least, there was my uncle. He, being the boss, had tremendous power over me but his demeanor is one that always interested me.

He approached work with a dedication that I had previously never seen. He focused in on something he loved and worked as hard as he could at it. His sweat and pain covered the walls of a heat-treating plant that he had helped put together and it was his hands that held it in place. Most of the time he could be found joking with a fellow co-worker or having a laugh with a customer, but when it was time to work, you were expected to work. It's not like it was an option, as I had been accustomed to during my pampered home life. As time passes, my memories of the heat-treating plant and its inhabitants will fade, but the memory of my uncle's dedication will forever guide me through all of my working endeavors.

In between talks with my uncle and other workers, the rest of my summer consisted of remedial chores around the shop and the surrounding areas in which I was given some of the most disgusting jobs that could be found. At the moment I was wishing nothing more than for football season to start so I could quit work and head back to school. So far I had not been able to find a better job than this one and with football season approaching I chose not to look anymore. I promised my uncle that I would come back to work after the season was over. Football season came and three months went by in the blink of an eye. I was now faced with a new conflict that had to be dealt with.

During those months that I was off I thought very little about the prospects of a new job. The thought just never seemed to enter my brain. It was as if I had put a mental block in my mind to keep work out of my life. As football season came to a close however the idea of a new job began to crawl back into my mind. The hunt for a new perfect job began and the cycle of teenage job sorrows continued on.

With my resume and reference list in hand I wandered out into the job market. I was a seventeen-year-old in search of a modest paying job in which I wouldn't have to sweep or burn my skin off. The specifications weren't exclusive, but the market for non-eighteen year old workers was slim. Everywhere I turned there were applications with the words "must be eighteen to apply for employment." These words slammed into my heart and shot down many of my prospective areas of employment. I was nearing the point of giving up my job search and dooming myself to a life of working in the heat treating plant. Then, just as it had done before, the light shined down upon me again and my dad suggested that I apply at the Kinko's Copy Center. I filled out an application and went down to the open interview. A few more hand shakes later and a little bit of paperwork and I was a full-blown Kinko's coworker. The saga of job sorrows continued on however because the time had come for me to break it to my uncle that I was quitting the heat treating plant. The only problem with talking to my uncle about this is that he had been working at the heat treating plant since he was sixteen. His idea of work was sweating and toiling for eight hours a day so that you could earn an honest wage. He would never understand that I was tired of working so hard for not that great of a wage.

Of course he would be a little mad. I knew that from the get go. I was just trying to find a way to break it to him nicely. Luckily he took it well. There was no yelling and no disowning me from the family. He didn't quite accept that I was tired of the work and he called me lazy. I think he was joking, but in some underlying way he might not have been. The truth is that during his time at the heat-treating plant he had not had much choice in staying or quitting his job. Circumstances outside of his control had managed to keep a strong hold on his employment. In a way, he might have been resentful at the fact that I was able to leave so easily.

So that was that. I was gone from the heat treating plant and off to my new working world at Kinko's. Of course it was a little frightening. Every new job has that bit of anxiety built into it, but I figured that after the torture I had undergone at the heat-treating plant, anything would be easier. This job was just another stepping stone along the river of life.

A few years have passed since I was employed at the heat-treating plant. It seems now a distant memory, but it is one that will always be present in mind. The heat-treating job had its faults, but within those aluminum walls I was enlightened to another part of the world that I had previously never seen. A world where manual labor was the only job available and where a college education could not be found. In a sense the heat-treating plant scared me. It presented me with a world that was harsh and brutal, where sweat and pain were everyday occurrences. Each day of working presented me with a chance to walk outside of my sheltered middle class life and see beyond those walls.

Each step in the working world is a tough one. Whether it is getting a new job, quitting your old job, or getting a promotion, or being demoted, each new step offers you

a greater conflict to overcome. The "rat race" that we live in has the ability to throw you every curveball imaginable, but in this world we must strive to triumph over those conflicts and become a better person because of them. One must approach these conflicts with an open mind and be willing to accept them and defeat them. With those skills in hand, every teenager and adult alike can emerge on top of their profession and become productive and innovative members of society. As I look back now upon that first job I realize that even through the dirt and grime that it was a positive experience. That hard labor and talks out in the shade have molded my outlook on life. Matt, the Samoan welder, always talked about how he wished he could have been a doctor. All I could think about was how to avoid Matt's fate. We all create our own destiny and a goal in my mind and my uncles dedication in my heart I know that I can achieve anything that my heart desires.

<b>PRACTICE DRAFT #2</b>
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Name: SIMON

Class: History 103

Paper title: How European Americans Justified Slavery

Assignment description: Answer how european americans justify racial slavery.

Question: Organization and strong, effective writing, sorry no endnotes to quotes

### How European Americans Justified Slavery

In a period of conflicting interests, the European Americans that founded the newly discovered Americas had many obstacles in their process of developing a great nation. In this period of development, conflict between the Native Americans, the British, and internal difficulties such as the loyalist (those loyal to the British government) made European Americans justify one problem that was the least of their concerns, slavery. The controversy that entailed slavery was not the denial of natural rights, but the power that accompanied slavery. European Americans justified slavery because slavery represented wealth and political influence in an extremely undeveloped and volatile country. Thousands immigrated to America in search of a new start and slavery helped them achieve it.

Immigrants rushed to the new Americas in search of potential wealth and religious emancipation from Europe. Since the arrival of the pilgrims to the mid-nineteenth century, many people found they could manipulate the British government and the newly established United States in numerous different ways. Wealth, during this period, was the best drug of influence. Wealth made the government operate in your best interests. In a very young country, such as the United States at the time, political influence became vital. By the mid-19th century, the northern states were beginning to become urbanized while the southern states continued to be primarily agricultural. In his farewell address on March 4, 1837, President Jackson warned the nation of the economic and political powers that accompanied banks and corporations. Jackson's farewell speech identified the conflicts of the nation as a whole to the dilemma that appeared with the arrival of banks.

It is one of the serious evils of our present system of banking that it enables one class of society and that by no means a numerous one by its control over the currency, to act injuriously upon the interests of all the others and to exercise more than its just proportion of influence in political affairs. they are in constant danger of losing their fair influence in the government

Jackson identified the political power the banks will have because of their newfound wealth. The idea of one class having political power over all of the rest based

purely on wealth created extreme competition for wealth between states, especially the northern states versus the southern states who had conflicting political goals. The southern states felt the tension from the increasing wealth of the north. Even though the south had a substantial amount of the nations wealth, the south relied more and more on farming to compete.

Agriculture was the economy for the south. Producing corn, cotton, tobacco, sugar, and various other crops produced almost all of the income for the south. Unfortunately, cotton and tobacco were some of the most labor-intensive crops to grow and extensive fieldwork was required. Before Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1793, cotton took ten times more work to produce which required extensive help from slaves. In 1852, Frederick Olmsted journeyed throughout the south and observed southern plantations and stayed one of his nights at a cotton plantation. Olmsted compares the plantations of the south with those of the north.

In New York there is not nearly so large a proportion of very rich men as here. There are very few people who farm over three hundred acres, and the greater number nineteen out of twenty, I suppose- work themselves with the hands they employ. (p.203)

Olmsted compared the abundance of the combination of huge plantations and slaves in the south with the north. Olmsted discusses how in the north, workers are not slaves and work for a wage, thus reducing profit from the crop. In contrast, the south obtained immense profit by having three hundred-acre plots and twenty slaves. Slavery played the most critical role in successful crop production. Without slaves, southern farmers could not produce enough to make farming a wealthy occupation.

Economic power and political influence was not the only justification of slavery by some southerners. In 1845, James Henry Hammond argues the moral reasoning for slavery. In a period of time when anti-slavery arguments are increasing dramatically, James Hammond discusses many points why slavery was moral and just. Hammond discusses pro-slavery arguments from religion to everyday life.

I may safely conclude, and I firmly believe, that American Slavery is not only not a sin, but especially commanded by God through Moses, and approved by Christ through his apostles.

This religious interpretation is obviously subject to intense controversy, but this passage shows the southern devotion to the lifestyle slavery provides and the southern interpretation of religion during this period. Hammond continued to discuss the importance of classes within societies. Hammond announced the importance of having an intelligent class (inferring whites) over an ignorant class (slaves).

In all countries save ours, these two classes, or the poor rather, who are presumed to be necessarily ignorant, are by law expressly excluded from all participation in the management of public affairs.

Hammond brings back an extremely important point about political influence. Hammond promoted slavery by labeling African Americans as ignorant, and that a society necessarily needs two classes. This is extremely important in this period of intense political influence. When Hammond states excluded from all participation in the management of public affairs, he is addressing a major issue that the nation has been struggling continually to deal with. If slavery were abolished, there would be a new influence on the government in a country of extremely conflicting interests. With this reasoning, Hammond hoped to persuade the abolitionists.

The justification of slavery by the European Americans was based entirely with the European Americans own self-interests. During this period of interior turmoil of the United States, slavery was an inferior concept to economic power and political assertion.

If slavery were abolished, the north would have political power over the inferior southern states. Slavery was the base of economic power for many farmers between the arrival of the pilgrims to the Civil War. Slavery represented wealth and political influence in an infantile country that could be easily persuaded. Slavery appeared to be of great significance during the 1800s, but slavery was apart of something much greater that took place during the Civil War.

**PRACTICE RESPONSES TO DRAFT #1****PRACTICE RESPONSE TO JUSTIN by A**

Hello Justin,  
I'm A from the Writing Center.

I appreciate the humor you used in your essay – it was fun to read. You do a great job of helping your reader understand what that first job was really like.

You have indicated that this essay is a conflict narrative. As I read, I was wondering about the conflict you chose. When I got to the conclusion, I saw your sentence about first jobs being sort-of terrible but still important because people learn skills they can use later. Is that what you mean to say? I'd like to hear that idea earlier in your essay. Up until the conclusion, I was thinking that first jobs are just terrible all around.

How could you address the idea of coming out of difficult and dreaded first jobs in your opening paragraph? How could you develop a thesis that tells your audience about this conflict?

You also asked about grammar. Let's look at the conclusion. One sentence in here mentions "we" and then says "a person." Be sure that you decide if you're talking about one person or about multiple people (we). That way you can be consistent throughout that last paragraph. If you need more help with this, just go to the Writing Center's home page, click on—(I don't know – I'm going to have to familiarize myself with our web page!)

Thanks for your submission. I hope the comments I've made will help you in your revision. We'll be glad to receive other submissions if you need drafts read in the future.

**PRACTICE RESPONSE TO JUSTIN by B**

Hi Justin,

I am B from the writing center. I found your narrative essay very interesting and organized. You have great talent with word choice and imagery.

Something that you could work on is the thesis, or argument in this paper. You said that the assignment is a “conflict narrative” but I did not see much actual conflict until the end of the essay. You say in your introduction that most teens have terrible experiences with their first jobs. You expand on that idea by discussing your own personal experience with your first job, but what is the conflict? In your conclusion you say that you learned a lot from your first job and it made you a better person, but you do not say anything about these ideas during the rest of your paper. Perhaps you could introduce the idea of a person’s first job being helpful to them in the introduction and discuss what you learned from your first job throughout your paper. As it is, your paper is VERY interesting and readable, but the conflict that your assignment calls for does not appear until your conclusion.

Thank you for submitting this paper, it was a very enjoyable read!

B,  
Writing Assistant



**WRITING ASSISTANTS' REPLY TO PRACTICE RESPONSES TO DRAFT #1****RESPONSE TO PRACTICE A by WC Coordinator**

Alright, yet another response to a response.

I would have to start by saying that I think A's response showed the same strengths that B's did in establishing a comfortable relationship with the writer. She opened by addressing the writer's strengths, and effectively used second person pronouns to give her response a conversational style. I was also impressed by her use of a particular phrase—"As I read." I'm all about providing "readerly" response, so I was particularly impressed with this turn of phrase. In addition, I think that A did a great job of setting up her clarification of thesis, following the old pattern of reader-reaction/question/comment. Which reminds me, I also liked A's use of numerous questions to direct the writer without being directive (see paragraph four in particular).

As for the goals, while I think that A did a nice job of establishing a good relationship with the writer, I agree with her observation that she could be a bit more conversational. For me, the best place to strengthen this aspect of her response would be in the first paragraph. I don't want to push my techniques on anybody, but I've found that explaining who you are and what you're doing is a good way to form a connection without losing your professional distance. Has anyone else found an effective way of introducing yourself to the writer?

I also noticed that, when addressing grammar, A referred to "one sentence." As a reader any reference to a conventional concern would be most effective when it was most specific.

So there you go. I'm just full of observations, aren't I? Anyone else? Anyone?

## RESPONSE TO PRACTICES A & B by Another WC Coordinator

Hi guys,  
[omitted small talk]

I'm quite pleased that your response focused on the main issue at hand—moving the statement of thesis (or at least explaining the conflict) to a spot earlier in the draft. No matter what you might feel needs fine-tuning, know that they're mere nuances compared to the importance of identifying the most pertinent issue for the writer.

As a reader of A and B's responses, I did feel the stiffness that A mentioned. I'm guessing that distance creeps in as a factor of our uncertainty about something new. Maybe I have a more effusive personality, but I thought his [Justin's] imagery was really rave-worthy!

I noticed both responses used "You did...You said...etc." I'm wondering if "you, you, you" could get to sounding almost accusatory after a while. X [the OWL Coordinator] mentioned the beauty of "I, I, I"—which strikes me as less confrontational, although somebody could think we were all self-absorbed (and would they be wrong?). I think we could probably also use "the draft, the draft, the draft" and avoid the whole personal pronoun problem.

I notice that A says something about grammar. I'm wondering if hints about grammar might be harder to pick up online since one can't reference the text or add explanations as easily. I wonder if it would help to actually retype the sentence in question. And I wonder if it would help to actually put the URL for the appropriate handout into the text of the e-mail.

On a related note: Are we all proofreading? I hope so, because I'd rather not model errors such as ones I saw—typo, pronoun agreement, and comma splice. Eek.

**PRACTICE RESPONSE TO DRAFT #2**

Hi Simon,

I'm XXXX from the Writing Center. I'll be making a few comments about your paper on slavery.

I liked the way you connected slavery to the wealth and political issues in the early United States. As I was reading, I was wondering about your thesis. You seem to be discussing reasons for slavery, Biblical perspectives on slavery, and the influence of James Henry Hammond on slavery. I found the following ideas in your last paragraph:

Slavery was the base of economic power for many farmers between the arrival of the pilgrims and the Civil War. Therefore, it represented wealth and political influence in an infantile country.

These ideas address one section of your paper (reasons for slavery). How could you build a thesis that incorporates these ideas with Biblical influences and those from James Henry Hammond? While you're thinking about a thesis, think about what you want your reader to take away from your paper.

With a thesis that connects the ideas about slavery in your paper, you can go through the rest of your draft and make sure that every paragraph supports that thesis. If you have ideas that are not supporting your thesis, then you can take them out of your draft.

Finally, I find it helpful to read my own papers out loud. Sometimes you may hear things that you didn't catch by reading silently.

I hope these comments are helpful to you. Please feel free to resubmit this draft or send us another draft.

:>) XXXX

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTIONS FOR LOGGING IN

#### Logging in to Workstation

You must log in to the Novell client and Microsoft Outlook to access our Inbox and print submissions.

Enter your WWU user name and password at the Novell Login prompt. Logging on allows you to print against your university printer quota. For most, printing against your student quota will not be an issue, but if you should begin running out, contact the WC Coordinator for an addition to your quota.

**Note on logging in:** Be sure you are in the “student” context. To check, click the “Advanced” button on the Novell prompt, and select “Students.wwu” from the “Context” menu.

#### Accessing Microsoft Outlook Inbox:

1. Open the following URL in the computer’s browser:  
<http://www.cms.wwu.edu>
2. Click on the link that reads “Click here for shared account access.”
3. Enter “grp.prov.writingcenter” in the box labeled “Mailbox Alias.”
4. Enter your WWU username and your assigned Online Response password in the new window that appears.
5. Click “OK” to log in to the Microsoft Outlook Web Access inbox.

You are now logged in to the Writing Center’s Microsoft Outlook account.

## APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTIONS FOR ARCHIVING

This set of instructions explains how to remove old files from the Outlook Email Program and save them on the hard drive of the reception computer.

**Note:** You must be logged in to Microsoft Outlook on the reception computer to archive.

### Logging In to Microsoft Outlook from the Reception Computer:

1. Double click on the Microsoft Outlook icon on the Windows desktop. A login prompt will appear.
2. Type in your WWU user name in the user name field.
3. Type in your OWLing password in the password field.
4. Click "OK" to log in to Microsoft Outlook.

### Procedure for archiving files:

1. Click on the Archiving Needed folder from the folder list in Microsoft Outlook to reveal the un-archived correspondence.
2. Double click either the questions or submissions folder from the oldest un-archived quarter.
3. Click to highlight a question or submission in the folder you opened.
4. Click on "File" in the menu bar.
5. Click on "Save As."
6. Select the Online Archives folder from the drop-down menu.
7. Double click on the appropriate quarter for the file you are saving (i.e., "Fall 03").
8. Select "Text Only" in the "Save as Type" box in the open window.

*(Continued)*

9. Type the name for the file in the “File Name” box.

**Note:** When we archive, we match the names of drafts and corresponding responses so we can quickly find the pairs when we assess our Online Response practice.

Use the following information to name the file. (See *Figure 2*.)

- The date that the file was sent in a series of 3 double digits (month, day, year).
- The writer’s last name. (Use the first name if no last name is given.)
- A capital letter designating the type of file you are archiving:  
 S = Submission  
 R = Response  
 Q = Question  
 F = Feedback  
 A = Answer

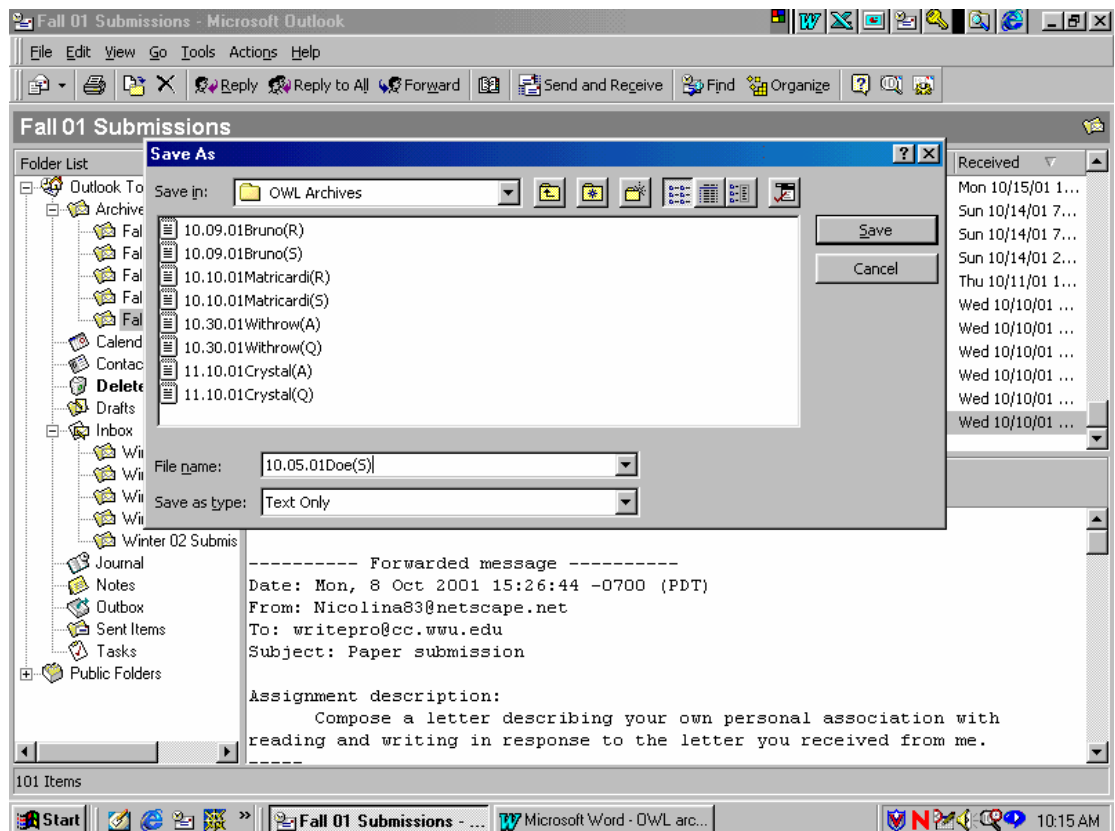


Figure 2: Naming a file for archiving. In this example, a draft was submitted on October 5, 2001 and is named “10.05.01Doe(S)”.

10. Click “Save” to save the newly named file to the Online Archives folder.

(Continued)

11. In the inbox, click on the file you just saved.
12. Drag the file to the Deleted Items folder.
13. Click on the “Answer” or “Response” subfolder in the Archiving Needed folder.
14. Locate the answer or response that corresponds to the file you have just archived.

**Note:** The matching responses/answers may not be in the same order as the submissions/questions. You may have to open several files in order to find it.

15. Follow steps 4-12 to save this file to the reception computer and remove it from Microsoft Outlook.

**Note:** For answers or responses, name the file exactly as you named the corresponding file **except** for the capital letter. Use the date that the original file was sent, **not** the date the Writing Center responded to it. Consistent filenames of corresponding messages help us match submissions and responses for assessment purposes.

Repeat these steps, working from the earliest dated files to the latest dated files, to archive all correspondence and remove it from the Outlook Program.