

Grading Agreement (First-Year Composition / Tech Comm)

Grades very rarely measure what they say that they're measuring.

We often claim that we're objectively judging the quality of someone's work when we assign a grade on a written assignment. But two teachers or two students can come to very different conclusions about the same piece of writing. I've seen this happen as a writing teacher, a Writing Center tutor, a test grader, a student. And in my academic research, I've also learned about how history, culture, language, the mood that I'm in when I'm grading, and a host of other factors -- both arbitrary and socially engineered -- can influence judgments about writing "quality."

The only thing I can justly assess is whether or not you *did* something: whether you turned something in, came to class, contributed to discussions, completed revision, went to the Writing Center. You either did these things, or you didn't do them.

Therefore, if you follow the agreement below, you will receive an A in this class. If you can't complete all of the terms, your grade will go down ½ letter grade for each category.

To earn an A, do 8 things. (1) Come to class, **(2)** periodically tell me how you think you're contributing and what you're learning from other people, **(3)** participate in peer review, **(4)** meet your deadlines, or make a plan to meet them if you're going to miss them **(5)** complete revisions (we'll discuss this more in class), **(6)** show up to your conferences either online or in person, **(7)** go to the writing center, and **(8)** use technology mindfully when you're in class.

In the first few weeks of class, I will offer several opportunities for amending, adding to, or changing this agreement for our class specifically. After that, we'll abide by this agreement for the rest of the semester.

Here are the details:

(1) Be present. Attend class. Don't be late too much.

For class to work, we have to all come to class and help each other. So, if you miss more than 4 classes total, your grade in this category will fall. Please try to be on time to class. If you have, or expect to have, problems with absences or latenesses, please speak to me. We all have lives outside of school (me too!), and sometimes they're complicated. I'm flexible, but I don't want you to get behind in the class.

(2) Complete your borrow / lend log. Learn from and teach other people. Be generous with your feedback when someone is helpful. Turn this in when it's due (dates are on the syllabus).

None of us have had exactly the same life experiences, and this means that we all have something really valuable to teach each other about the way that we see the world and how this impacts the way that we understand the course material.

Because of this, we will do lots of group, pair, and individual work in class. This is because I don't think I'm the only one with important stuff to teach you. But it's also because I think you learn better (and research supports this) when *you're* actively engaging with the material rather than just listening to me.

Our "conversations" will continue online in reading annotations and reflections. Each week, you should keep track of what [you've "borrowed" and "lent" in this log](#), which you'll turn in at various intervals throughout the semester. You will

give yourself a grade on your own contributions, and I will agree or disagree with how you've assessed yourself (and will let you know). This will constitute your grade for this part of the agreement.

What you've "lent" can take a lot of forms. Maybe you made an insightful comment in class or online. Maybe you helped someone to understand something in the assignment prompt. Maybe you shared a story that related to the reading that helped us to understand something. Maybe you asked a great question. Maybe you translated something for us into another language. When you "borrow" something useful from someone else, try to let them know (online or in person). I will let you know, too.

I will not "grade" your individual reflections or any other low-stakes writing, but I will read it and use it in class frequently. This means that if, once in a while, you miss a reflection, that's OK as long as you're doing most of them.

(3) Participate in peer review. Participate during every peer review workshop. Provide your classmates with helpful feedback.

Taking your classmates' work seriously enough to think hard about how it can be improved is a crucial part of becoming a better writer.

Note that this is not just about praise or criticism: it's about asking good questions, making interesting connections, helping someone to explore possibilities, suggesting helpful resources or references to things you've learned in class (ours or others).

We will explore some strategies for peer review before our first session. To maintain your grade in this category, you'll need to complete the in-person and the at-home portions of each peer review. If you're absent on the day of the review, you'll need to complete an additional at-home portion to receive full credit.

(4) Set your deadlines, and meet them. Turn in your drafts on time.

If you need extra time to complete an assignment (an extension), let me know as soon as you do. I'm happy to grant extensions: I just need to *know* so that it doesn't negatively impact peer review, conferences, etc.

Please don't ask me for an extension the night before something is due or after something is already due. Otherwise, meet the deadlines on the syllabus in order to satisfy this requirement.

(5) Revise, and complete revision reflections. Revise each major draft, and produce a revision letter describing the changes that you made between drafts and *why* you made the decisions that you did.

We'll talk a *lot* about revision in this class. Revision means substantially clarifying your ideas, reorganizing your points, rethinking your claims, adding or expanding your evidence, deepening or widening your research, adjusting your style, and re-imagining your relationship to your audience. I will provide you with feedback - either as a class and individually - at each stage of the writing process, and I will facilitate peer review so that you can get each other's feedback on your work.

My opinion is not the only one that matters, though: you also need to take the critiques of your peers and the Writing Center tutors into account. You do not have to make every change suggested by your readers, of course, because your writing is yours, and after all, readers will sometimes disagree. But you must take all feedback seriously (meaning: **you must actually address it**, or say in your reflection why you decided not to address it), and your drafts should show evidence of your careful consideration of your readers' suggestions. I will be reading your drafts and your reflections to see how you addressed feedback and / or how you decided not to address it. As long as you have justified this in your response, you have satisfied this requirement.

(6) Attend in-class conferences, and prepare for them. Attend all scheduled group conferences with me. Come prepared to use the conference time productively.

Everyone will meet me in small groups a few times this semester. Before every conference, I will give you a list of “to do” items that you’ll need to complete before we meet. These are meant to prepare you for the conference, and to give us stuff to discuss. To satisfy this requirement, simply do these items, and show up to your conference.

(7) Attend Quick Start or Writing Center consultations.

If you are enrolled in Quick Start (I will let you know individually), attend 4 conferences during the semester (you are not *also* obligated to attend the Writing Center, but you may if you wish). If you are not enrolled in Quick Start, attend an [individual consultation](#) OR [a workshop](#) at the Writing Center at least 4 times during the course of the semester. Don’t wait: these fill up fast.

A note: many of you work, and some of you are full-time students and have full-time jobs. I recognize that this means that your opportunity to visit the Writing Center might be limited. If this is the case for you, don’t worry. Just reach out to me, and we’ll make another arrangement.

(8) Practice mindful uses of technology.

I encourage the use of technology in our class. If you have a laptop or a tablet, bring it. If you access course readings through your phone, great. If you use an online translator, that’s no problem at all.

However, this means that I would like for you to use technology to do class-related stuff and that I’ll sometimes ask you to put away your tech to focus on something else.

If you need to be on your phone for an important reason, just let me know that at the beginning of class, and please feel free to step outside. If you consistently distract other people with your uses of tech, we’ll talk. To satisfy this requirement, use technology to do class-related stuff.