



# Teaching For Success®

## Quick Answers

No. 808

### Q: There Is Too Much to Do; How Can I Get it All Done?

#### A: How Team Edits Can Lighten Your Load

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**A**t our institution, we are teaching more classes than ever as well as serving on an unprecedented number of committees.

This situation has created such a tight grading schedule that some instructors forgo in-depth grading that benefits students. Or they may suffer burn out writing the same comments on papers and assignments over and over. If you find yourself in a similar bind, try the following idea. It requires devoting one class period to this activity, but the results are worth it. Before any major written paper or presentation is turned in for a grade, I set aside one class session—this day is specifically mentioned in the syllabus—and devote the day to manuscript editing.

##### 1. Paper exchange

The students bring a draft of their papers to class and exchange it with another student. The peer editor then goes through the paper looking for the grammatical items such as ending sentences with prepositions, use of contractions in formal writing, formatting problems, typographical errors, misspellings, comma splicing, and etc. The students then exchange the paper with another student and then another.

##### 2. Second round

Then, I call for a second edit. Now, students read the draft paper for content to see if the writer's ideas make sense, arguments are well supported, choice of vocabulary words are appropriate, etc. If there is time, the students examine another draft. At the end of the class session, three to five students will have examined a student's draft. The student then takes the draft and makes those editorial changes before turning the assignment in for a grade.

##### 3. Outcomes

My students feel better about seeing other drafts and learn how to look for mistakes. They experience how editing others' work makes them stronger editors. It also means higher grades since I'm not seeing as much improper English. In addition students are less likely to argue about grades and this saves time! For students who still may be experiencing problems with the assignments, I suggest that they visit my office to examine sample copies from former students. Seeing good writing samples is greatly appreciated by our English as second language learners and first generation college students.

