Editing Strategies to Share with Your Students

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“Marking errors is most effective when it is used to help students develop their own editing strategies.” – Jordan Ruyle (ruyle@berkeley.edu)

a. Read backwards (starting at the beginning of each sentence!) or—even better—hit a hard return between sentences to remove sentences from their context in the paragraph. Then treat the sentences as grammar exercises (e.g., circling verbs to check for verb tense or subject-verb agreement and underlining nouns to check for article usage).

b. Read multiple times, looking only for one kind of language problem each time.

c. Mark the paper in some way so that language stands out: Underline or highlight all the verbs. Draw arrows from pronouns to their antecedents. Bracket subject-verb sets to check structure and punctuation.

d. Use the ‘Find’ function to search for repeated errors (e.g., a non-count noun repeatedly pluralized or a missing comma before “and” in a compound sentence).

e. Give the paper a rest after revising and before editing.

f. Read the paper out loud to yourself – or a partner. The partner should have a pencil and note whenever something sounds problematic.

g. Have a partner read the paper out loud. If the partner stumbles or misreads something, that’s a cue to take a look.

h. Be very suspicious--if you aren’t sure that it’s right, look it up or ask a friend of tutor.

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