

New Techniques for Teaching Grammar in the Composition Classroom

- First new rule = no more grammar lectures! As fun as they are for us, students tend to tune out, so the guiding principle now is to find inventive new ways to teach grammar without resorting to grammar lectures / grammar rule worksheets done in class, etc.
- Try to find ways for the students to teach themselves grammar. Try exercises where the students try to figure out the rules that govern some correct and in-correct examples (see the sample exercise in this packet)
- Get students to teach the rules. If you want to have a grammar lecture happen in your classroom, have it be one that the students put on. Try this: divide the students into groups and give each group a comma rule to study then teach to the class. Challenge the students to come up with exercises for their peers to do. I think you'll find that everyone learns a lot more this way than they do whenever we lecture and present the students with skills exercises.
- Practice "just in time remediation": to do this, you basically become a tutor instead of a teacher. Sit down with a student and look at a draft of a paper and find some grammar issues in the student's writing then help the student find a better way to express that idea. Sometimes you might want to give the student a mini-lecture about one of the issues in the paper or you might want to identify a problem sentence and help the student figure out what's wrong with guided comments as the student works to puzzle out the error and correct the situation. Essentially, you just need to stop presenting an abstract and random grammar rule each week (Fragments in week 1, comma splices in week 2, etc.) and target your lessons directly to the specific needs of the student in the moment. The challenge here is that takes more time since you have to work one-on-one with each student. You'll have to come up with something for the other students to do while you have your conferences.
- Create ways for the students to work with your comments on returned papers. Assign them the task of looking up some of the rules you reference in your comments and make them do some work with the specific errors they are having. See the example assignments in this packet.
- If a student needs even more help, say someone has the same problem over and over again in multiple papers, try assigning that student targeted grammar homework from the handbook or from worksheets copied just for them or from an online resource like Grammar Bytes (<http://www.chompchomp.com/exercises.htm>)