Instructor Workshop Training

How to plan and conduct writing workshops in any class

Agenda for Today

I. Definition and Goal
II. Topics and Timing
III. Structure and Activities
IV. Tips
V. Workshop Alternatives
I. Definition and Goal

*What workshops are and why we do them*

**WORKSHOP:** a lesson designed to address a specific skill or step of the writing process in the context of a particular assignment

**GOAL:** make better writers and teachers of writing—*not* improve student performance on a particular assignment

II. Workshop Topics and Timing

*How to target instruction and time it strategically*
Selecting a Topic

- Pick a specific writing skill or step of the writing process.
- Select a topic with which most students need help.

Sample Workshop Topics

- **Probably Too Narrow**
  - Thesis statements
  - Comma usage
- **Probably Too Broad**
  - The writing process
  - Grammar
- **Just Right**
  - Outlining
  - Intro and Thesis
  - Coherence/Cohesion
  - Peer Review
  - Incorporating feedback
Strategic Timing

Timing Tips:

- Integrate workshops into an existing assignment.
- Schedule when students have just finished that step of the process.
- Leave time to revise and resubmit.

Why it matters:

- Use student writing—not generic samples.
- Students come with questions and leave able to apply learning.
- Students put more effort into a revision that counts.

Sample Timeline for MWF

- **Wednesday:** Some (or all) students submit a draft to you early.

- **Wednesday-Friday:** Look over early submissions, choose samples, and develop questions. Design handouts/activities.

- **Monday:** All students bring drafts to class and the workshop takes place. You model the skill or process using the early submissions, and then students analyze their own drafts or a classmate’s.

- **Wednesday or Friday:** All students turn in a revision based on Monday’s workshop.
III. Workshop Structure and Activities

*How to design instruction*

Recommended Workshop Structure/Steps

1. Provide General Background on Topic
2. Review Assignment Guidelines
3. Analyze Student Samples as a Class
4. Have Students Analyze Drafts
5. Assess Learning

*Note: All steps do not have to happen the same day. But, if they do, they last 50-70 minutes.*
Additional Activities for Analysis (Independent or Peer)

Students could also:

- Consider or create sample revisions
- Create outlines of passages (traditional or descriptive)
- Use checklists to note presence/absence of concrete writing features

IV. Other Tips

Guiding principles to keep in mind
Other Tips

- Emphasize process over product
- Go for depth over breadth
- Choose quality over quantity
- Consider how student priorities might change over the semester

V. Workshop Alternatives and Complements

What to do instead of or in addition to workshops
Workshop
Alternatives and Complements

- Conferences with the instructor
- Revision and resubmission (possibly contingent on tutoring)
- Recommended or required tutorials for a whole class
- Tutor feedback on assignment design
- Tutors to assist with group work