

Using Focused Editing Tasks During the Revising and Editing Process

It is often disappointing to see the results when students edit their work on their own or with a peer. Most times, students do poorly in this area because they are not sure what to look for when reviewing their writing. One way to improve students' revising and editing skills is to give them specific, focused tasks that will help them identify potential problems in their writing. By making these tasks concrete and visible on the paper, we build accountability and provide students with an opportunity to improve on problem areas.

Focused Editing Tasks should be clear, specific, and visible. We suggest having students complete them in color, whether with a colored pen or marker on paper or through highlighting and changing text color within digital documents. Using color motivates students, makes Focused Editing tangible for them, and makes it easy for you to see what they've done.

It's best if Focused Editing Tasks correlate to the assigned Focus Correction AreasSM (FCAs). We have chosen these FCAs as our priorities for instruction and scoring, so it's important for students to understand that these should be their priorities as well. Focused Editing Tasks remind students to check that they have met the FCAs for the assignment. They also provide students with a concrete technique for doing so.

Students can complete Focused Editing independently or with a peer to learn how to evaluate their own writing and how to provide thoughtful feedback to each other. Focused Editing Tasks provide students with the direction they need to do both.

Note: When introducing this process, it is best to carve out time to guide students through the steps as a whole class and repeat these steps together for several assignments in a row. You may want to model Focused Editing on chart paper or your interactive whiteboard, so students understand how to mark their papers. Once introduced, Focused Editing Tasks may take anywhere from two to five minutes, depending on how many you assign and the age of the students. Students can do them at the end of class before submitting their writing; or, teachers may choose to hold writing until the next day and have students do their Focused Editing at the beginning of class when they are less tired and can look at their work with a "fresh set of eyes."

We recommend you include Focused Editing in your routine *every time* students submit Type Three, Four, or Five writing in order to build good habits, increase accountability for the FCAs you assign, and draw attention to potential writing issues before students submit their work.

The next page contains instructions and examples for using Focused Editing Tasks with your students.

Follow These Instructions for Focus Editing:

1. Guide students in completing one or more Focused Editing Task tied to the FCAs, or show them how to address a common error you are seeing. See below for examples of Focused Editing Tasks that are concrete, specific, and visible.
2. Once students have completed each task, direct them to go back and make any necessary corrections, clarifications, or additions to their work.

Examples of Focused Editing Tasks

Assigned FCA

Include three reasons with supporting evidence.

Use a clear claim statement.

Use at least five science vocabulary words.

Use at least three realistic colors in your picture.

Vary sentence beginnings.

Conclusion reviews, restates, and calls to action.

Use correct beginning capitals and end marks.

Use an attention-getting lead.

Incorporate at least three literary devices.

Possible Focused Editing Task

➤ Number your three reasons and underline each piece of evidence.

➤ Underline your claim.

➤ Highlight the science vocabulary words you used.

➤ Hold up three crayon colors you used in this picture.

➤ Circle the first word of every sentence. If two in a row are the same, change one.

➤ Use red text for your review, blue for your restatement, and green for your call to action.

➤ Circle end marks in red and beginning capitals in green. Check that they come in pairs—red then green.

➤ Underline your lead and label the technique you used in the margin (starting with dialogue, an interesting fact, a humorous anecdote, and so on.)

➤ Highlight each literary device you used and label the type in the margin.

Observed Problem Areas

Students not capitalizing the pronoun “I”

Students writing rambling sentences overusing the word “and”

Students misspelling visibly posted word wall words

Possible Focused Editing Task

➤ Work with a partner to circle the pronoun “I” every time it appears in your writing. On your own, give yourself a check above each “I” that is capitalized; fix any that are not capitalized.

➤ Box or highlight “and” every time it is used. Find sentences with “and” used two or more times; divide these sentences in two or into more than two shorter sentences.

➤ Work with a partner to underline all word wall words used. Mark a star above each that is correctly spelled and fix any mistakes.