

## Chapter 3 Collaborating with Writers

1. Consider the following case studies as topics for class discussion.
  - a. You are editing an anthology of ten articles written by various subject matter experts. Part of your punctuation style is to use a comma before the final item in a series. When you return the edited copy to one writer who has omitted commas before the final item, he protests aggressively, challenges your knowledge, and threatens to withdraw the article from the collection unless you remove the commas you have inserted. What is your response? Before you decide finally how you will respond, think about your goals for the anthology.
  - b. You are a recent college graduate editing a research proposal for a senior staff member with a Ph.D. The proposal is full of academic jargon that you think may invite the proposal reviewers to smirk at the researcher rather than to respect her. You simplify some of the sentences and vocabulary. You return the edited proposal to the writer, who, in turn, delivers it to the typist. Later you learn from the typist that the writer has written, “Ignore the editorial comments. Type as originally written.” You’re furious at the put-down and the waste of your time; furthermore, you are convinced that the pretentious style will jeopardize funding. What do you do?
  - c. The writer whose work you are editing is a very nice person, but his writing is terrible. You can’t understand many of the sentences, not because the subject matter is unfamiliar but because the construction is so bad. Frankly, you’re appalled at the lack of writing skill, and you know your attitude is getting in the way of your work. What can you do?
  - d. For cases a, b, and c, identify specific ways in which efficient management might prevent the conflict.

2. Conduct editor–writer conferences in class and then complete the comment sheet on the next page. Each student should bring a document he or she has written to a classmate for editing. The document should be in a technical rather than a creative genre. In a brief planning session, the writer explains to the editor the purpose and readers of the document and any particular editing needs that he or she has identified. The editor, in turn, may query the writer. If the document is substantial, the editing will take place out of class. After editing is complete, each student editor meets the writer for a review conference. After the conference, the writer evaluates the editing and the editing conference and makes suggestions for future conferences.
  
3. Describe a specific example of each of the three strategies discussed here for productive working relationships: good editing, good management, interpersonal skills.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. If you have had experience—good or bad—working as an editor with a writer or as a writer with an editor, analyze where the relationships succeeded or failed by considering editing skill and procedures, management, and interpersonal skills.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Think of ways to express these critical statements in a way to encourage productive revision. You will have to invent specific details.
  - a. These sentences are awkward.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. The whole section of the report is unclear.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. The brochure is poorly organized.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. It’s impossible to tell why the project you propose is important.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - e. The instructions are confusing.

## Project for a Classmate to Edit

Due dates: Submit a paper for a classmate  
Edit a classmate's paper (out of class)  
Conduct a writer-editor conference (in class)

As a follow-up to Chapter 3, "Collaborating with Writers," we will use part of a class for in-class conferences. You will meet face-to-face with a classmate whose writing you have edited to discuss your editing and suggestions for revision. Documents will be distributed so that each class member will be both an editor and a writer on editing day. You will not edit the work of the classmate who edits you.

### The document for your classmate to edit

Please provide a document you have written. It may be a print or online document. Look for something that meets these criteria:

- technical rather than literary subject matter and genres  
manuals, reports, term papers, proposals, brochures and the like are acceptable; short stories, poems, and biographies are not
- length of roughly 5 typewritten, double-spaced pages (or the equivalent)  
If your document is longer, bring the whole thing but suggest a 5-page section that the editor may work on
- clean copy, not one that already has an instructor's marks on it
- copy that the editor can mark
- digital copy for editors who will work online or for any online document

If the document is one that you are preparing for another class this semester, please ask the instructor of that class whether he or she approves another student editing the paper.

Provide for your classmate editor in addition to the document:

- your contact information (email address, phone number)
- brief description of the project: purpose, audience, anything else that will help the editor make editorial decisions

### Logistics

The focus of this activity is on the conference itself and your strategies for communicating with and encouraging the cooperation of the writer. But to establish a good relationship and prepare a good conference, you must first edit well.

*You will edit out of class and come to class on the assigned day prepared for the conference. You will conduct the conference in class.* Then the writer whose work you edited will complete an "Editing Conference Comment Sheet" (see D&A 3.2) to turn in and ultimately to be given to you. The comments will indicate both the quality of the editing and the strategies of conferencing. You will receive class participation points on the basis of the comments that are made about you as editor, the comments you make about your editor (specificity, substance), and my observations during the editing conferences.

Conferences will last about 10 minutes each.

**Editing Conference Comment Sheet**

Editor \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this activity is to provide experience for editors in meeting writers in a conference. You can help the editor learn how to collaborate effectively with a writer by commenting on the experience you have had in being edited by this editor. Your comments and suggestions will be most helpful if they are specific. Avoid statements that are simply evaluative (“good,” “needs work”). Instead, identify the particular strengths and goals for this editor.

**The editing**

Comment on the editing, considering completeness, accuracy, objectivity, and suitability for the genre and readers. Did the editor overlook any editing needs? Was the editor too aggressive on some issues? Did the editor seem to be a collaborator? Comment.

**The conference**

Comment on the conference, considering its organization, the editor’s clarification of the plan for the conference, and goal oriented language. Was the editor confident? How did you feel about being edited by this editor? Comment.

**Suggestions**

What should this editor work on in order to increase effectiveness in editing and in communicating with a writer? (Use the back of the page, if necessary.)