



SUPPORTING SURF PROPOSAL WRITERS

What makes for a good proposal? Past students suggested these ideas:

- A well-defined, focused idea
- Clear explanation of method or how the project will be carried out
- Proposal is feasible—writer has considered the time, money, resources, and research needed to succeed
- Continuity—the proposal builds on the writer’s past research, experiences, or skills
- A significant research question or issue
- Awareness of the state of research in this area in the writer’s academic discipline
- Enthusiasm or passion for the work
- Be sure to follow the SURF guidelines and use them as a checklist when reviewing the completed draft:
our.unc.edu/surf

What kinds of feedback or tips help writers? Past students suggested these:

- Models or examples
- Help with imagining the audience/readers
- Help with learning to use own voice
- Specific feedback (not just “it’s pretty good” or something similar)
- Advice that it’s o.k. to cut things and not to get too attached to particular phrases or sentences—you can always generate more text
- Help with the writing process: getting ideas down, taking a break, then editing
- Hearing others’ perspective or response to a draft

How might you work with student writers?

- Find out when, where, and how often they would like to meet and how you can best contact one another.
- Ask where the writer is at in the writing process (research? brainstorming? drafting? revising?) and how it’s going.
- Ask what the writer would like to talk about today.
- Ask the writer to describe his/her project out loud.
- Ask the writer to give you a “t our” of his/her draft—the writer can tell you what each paragraph is supposed to accomplish, and you can see whether the actual draft matches the writer’s intentions.
- Ask the writer about his/her past experiences of writing—what has gone well? What is easy about writing?
- What is difficult? What kinds of feedback has the writer received?
- Ask the writer what he/she sees as the strengths and weaknesses of this draft.
- Read the draft out loud. Hearing it may help the writer identify gaps, problems with organization, confusing sentences, unnecessary repetition, grammar errors, etc. Encourage the writer to mark sentences he/she has questions about as you read.

The UNC Writing Center's Ten Principles for Writing Consultants

1. Our goal is to improve writers, not individual pieces of writing. We suggest strategies that students can use in future writing situations.
2. We view writing problems as solvable problems. While we recognize that writing can be demanding and discouraging, we offer encouragement and information to help students move forward in their development as writers.
3. We teach writing by identifying patterns and manageable points of revision. We set priorities based on a student's current needs in each conference. We cannot address every issue or problem in a piece of writing.
4. We aid students in coping with a variety of writing contexts. We help students analyze assignments and recognize disciplinary writing conventions so that they may become flexible writers in the academy.
5. We model problem-solving for students. We readily admit when we do not know the answer to someone's question and pride ourselves on finding answers in handbooks and dictionaries and from other writers.
6. We see and teach writing as a series of choices. We encourage students to take responsibility for those choices at all levels in their texts. It is the student's role, not ours, to make decisions about a text. Accordingly, we do not write on student's papers.
7. We assist writers by being readers. In doing so, we demonstrate how an audience makes sense of the choices a writer has made.
8. We encourage students to write during a conference. We offer students an opportunity to practice a writing task with a consultant's support.
9. We do not speculate on the grade a piece of writing might receive, nor do we discuss assigned grades. Our position as consultants in the University community prohibits negative comments about teachers, teachers' comments on papers, or assignments.
10. We strive to offer models of good prose in our own publications.



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