

Effective Conferences¹

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I. Types of Conferences

- Pre-draft drop-in
- Pre-draft formal
- Interim draft formal
- Post-mortem
- Optional v. mandatory

II. Timing Considerations

- Length of conference
- Return paper in time to allow student review *before* conference
- Keep an eye on the next due date when scheduling/allowing conferences

III. Teacher preparation for the conference

- Effective critique
- Final comment provides agenda
- On-the-spot review
- Other

IV. Student preparation for the conference

- Review of critique
- Self-critique
- Assigned preparation

V. The conference itself

- Establish an appropriate environment
- Phases of the conference (Wellford-Slocum)
 - Build rapport
 - Provide an overview of the problem(s) to be discussed (student and/or teacher)
 - Work toward resolving the problem(s)
 - Provide closure
- Communicate effectively
- Encourage student participation and note-taking
- Follow an agenda as needed

¹With thanks to Lorraine Bannai, who shared a PowerPoint prepared by herself and Connie Krantz, both of Seattle University School of Law.

VI. Strategies for addressing the problems (Bannai & Kroontz)

Reader-based reactions

Quasi-Socratic

“Link back” to what the student knows

Work on a section to illustrate a point

Validate what the student has done well

VII. Challenges

Not just a river in Egypt: students who deny that there is a problem

Students who have learned English as a second language

Students with learning disabilities or other academic difficulties

Students with personal problems

VIII. Ending the Conference

Staying on schedule

Addressing the future

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²With thanks to Lorraine Bannai for sharing her bibliography on this same topic.

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