Commenting in Online Writing Appointments

(resource developed by R. Johnson)

Characteristics of Effective Online Conferences (Hewett, 2015)	**Examples**
Personalizing	"Hi Brad! My name is Rachel." "This reminds me of a point you wanted to make when we worked together last week. I think it comes through very strong and supports your thesis. Kudos!"
Offering praise	"I hadn't thought of that in this way. What a unique interpretation!" "The way you've phrased this is super cool." "Good point." "Yes!"
Providing information (definitions, guidelines, writing conventions)	"There's an error here called a 'comma splice.' This happens when you join two complete sentences with a comma without a coordinating conjunction. To fix this, you could add a word like 'and' or 'but'. You could also consider separating them with a period." "When analyzing and critiquing literature, you should use the present tense to discuss the text. Here is a link to an explanation with examples: [link]"
Asking open-ended, facilitative questions	"Through what lens would a school principal view this problem? How would something like what you are proposing be funded? Be sure to address other points of view." "Is it true that all accounting education programs lack an ethics course? Do you have a piece of research/evidence you could pair with this claim to strengthen it?"
Explaining problems/offering honest critique	"I wasn't able to follow your argument in these three paragraphs. I can see that you've included a lot of research, but I struggled to find the connection between that material and your thesis. This section would be stronger if you revised to include clear, specific points at the beginning of each paragraph and explanations/reasoning to supplement your evidence."
Suggesting options for revision	"This word choice struck me as a little confusing. Instead of saying 'decision usefulness,' you might rephrase to something like 'sound decision making.'"

Modeling/demonstrating changes	"This is quite a strong statement… Be careful when using words like 'none' or 'never.' I'm sure there are examples of schools that have thriving arts education programs. Adjust your statement here to say something that leaves room for the possibility that some schools still value arts education. For instance, you might say, "Arts programs have been cut significantly in schools with lower standardized test scores," instead of saying that there are none at all."
Giving students specific tasks/actions for revision	"There are some important areas for improvement in this essay. In particular, you can focus your revisions on describing the problem in greater detail earlier in the essay. This will help make your proposed solutions at the end more convincing. You can also incorporate more specific evidence about the costs and benefits you mention in section three. This will help you demonstrate a deeper knowledge of the research."
Balance between discussion of different types of writing concerns	*After each page, re-read your comments to make sure that you address concerns of audience, thesis, organization, and development of ideas. If these elements of the paper are strong, it is okay to shift your focus to errors in sentence structure, word choice, or grammar.*
Knowing how much to comment on (critical mass)	*Overloading clients with commentary may mean that you overwhelm or confuse them. Be strategic and try to choose priorities for revision that will be the most helpful (see previous). It is perfectly reasonable to suggest a follow up appointment to address concerns outside of those priorities. Mention to the student in your endnote that you have selected priorities and that you have time constraints.*

Hewett, B.L. (2015). *The online writing conference: A guide for teachers and tutors.* New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin's.