



Marking lean: More work for them than me

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What's the idea?

For marking to be a useful practice, the emphasis should be on teachers doing less as students do – and, therefore, learn – more.

What does it mean?

Marking fulfills two main purposes:

- 1. To allow teachers to engage with students' work so that they know how well they are doing and can plan accordingly**
- 2. To provide students with feedback so that they know how they can do better next time.**

'Marking lean' is about delivering both of these outcomes in a way that reduces workload and increases impact on learning.

What are the implications for teachers?

You do not have to mark everything. Be selective and focus on the specific pieces of work that you would like students to improve on or respond to (see our Compact Guide on selective marking).

Do not mark old work; marking is only beneficial to students if they can remember the original task. If you have missed a few weeks, skip them and focus on giving immediate, formative feedback on recent work, which students remember completing.

Think of marking as task-setting or instruction. What do you want the student reading your feedback to do with it? Consider creating codes for efficiency, for example: write 'depth' in the margin to ask the student to explore a particular point in more detail, or 'breadth' to ask for more varied examples.

To help students feel that their work matters, use their presentation as a proxy for wider standards. Encourage students to produce their best, every time and praise them when they do. For example, 'You've improved your work by using paragraphs to organise your ideas, well done.'

Top tips:

Plan time for students to respond to marking as soon as they receive it. Make this a regular starter activity and ensure students understand that they are expected to work harder responding to your feedback than you did giving it.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- » Brookhart SM (2017) How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students. Virginia: ASCD.
- » Hattie J and Timperley H (2007) The power of feedback. Review of Educational Research 77(1):81–112.
- » See the work by Saffron Walden County High School, including an excellent compilation of strategies created by Nathan Cole and Jo Sansome and shared with Tom Sherrington. Details can be found here: Sherrington T (2012) Making feedback count. Available at: <https://teacherhead.com/2012/11/10/mak-feedback-count-close-the-gap/> (accessed 26 October 2018).