



Short Answer

Teaching Tips



To help foster a supportive environment for feedback, introduce the [importance of feedback](#) and [how to give empathetic feedback](#) with our mini-lessons.



The best questions are open-ended and ask students to **justify** opinions, **analyze** material, **articulate** a thought process, or **evaluate** a claim.



Avoid fact-based recall questions.



The best feedback criteria are **positively oriented** and relevant to learning objectives. Criteria can focus on both **content knowledge** and **writing structure**.

- Make students aware of the criteria so they know how to craft their response. Or, have students decide what appropriate criteria would be.
- Emphasize that students have to make a choice about assigning feedback. *Both* or *neither* aren't options!



The best discussion questions ask students to **verbalize their thought process** about the feedback they gave. For example: "93% you said Response 1 explained the concept of photosynthesis better. Can someone share what aspect of the response made you think that?"

- Have students **predict** what results will be.
- Focus discussion on the qualities of the **responses** rather than on the students who wrote the responses.



To promote students' **metacognitive development**:

- Encourage students to **ask themselves questions** during the activity:
 - "Does my response meet all the criteria?"
 - "How did giving feedback improve my understanding of the content?"
 - "How can I improve my response using the feedback I got?"
- Provide clear **time signals** throughout the activity.



To **incorporate feedback in the moment**, ask students to reflect on how they can improve their response after receiving feedback. You may want to take time to have them **revise** their responses, either in class or for homework.




Ethics

In all Short Answer activities, your students **create** responses, **compare** peer responses and provide scaffolded feedback, then **converse** results as a class.

Short Answer gets your students the immediate feedback they need through social, engaging peer feedback activities and gets you deeper insight into what your students know.

Short Answer can be used at every stage of your Ethics lesson plan from decision-making scenarios to reflections on community service

Bellringer	Get students warmed up and engaged by using Short Answer to prompt written responses about what stands out from yesterday's class.
Check for understanding	Break up lectures with quick feedback activities that get students interacting with one another. Deepen understanding while getting a quicker, more accurate pulse of what they know on an individual level.
Guided practice	Group students together to write responses and give feedback to other groups, or provide a model response in Short Answer.
Independent practice	During Short Answer activities, encourage students to reflect on how their response matches up to the ones voted as the strongest by the class. Invite revision and iteration of responses as another in-class activity, exit ticket, or homework.
Writing revision	Have students copy-and-paste portions of an essay or writing assignment (e.g. thesis, intro paragraph) into Short Answer. Then, conduct peer feedback activities to help students revise their work before final submission.
Exit Ticket	Complete a quick, one-round Short Answer activity to leave students thinking about the most important points of the day.
Homework	Have students complete writing assignments about core content and bring them in next class for peer feedback activities and discussion to deepen understanding.

 See the following page for two detailed Ethics use cases with example questions, feedback criteria for students to evaluate responses with, and standards alignments.

Sample Use Cases: Ethics

Exploring Ethical Scenarios

Activity Time: 5-10 minutes

Use Short Answer to propose a scenario or moral dilemma and see how students would respond. Students compare peers' approaches and discuss as a class to explore nuanced ethical decision making.

Sample Questions

- A trolley is heading towards 5 people tied up, unable to move on the tracks. You stand next to a lever that would divert the trolley onto a track where 1 person is tied up, unable to move. Do you pull the lever? Why?
- Does your response to the trolley problem change if you are the one driving the trolley? Why?
- How would Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill act in the trolley problem?

Feedback Criteria: clear reasoning; well thought out; moral; ethical; creative

Standards Alignment Examples

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. (CC, CCRA.W.3)
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (CC, CCRA.R.9)
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. (CCRA.R.6)

Service Participation and Reflection

Activity Time: 10-15 minutes

Use Short Answer to have students create guidelines for ethical service work or reflect on service work they've recently done. Discuss as a class what makes for successful, productive, and meaningful service work.

Sample Questions:

- What are important considerations to take in mind when entering a new community for the first time?
- What surprised you most about working on your project over the course of the year?
- If you could begin your service work over again, what would you do differently? Why?

Feedback Criteria: strong details to explain reasoning; compelling; empathetic; ethical mindset

Standards Alignment Examples

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. (CC, CCRA.W.3)
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (CC, CCRA.W.4)
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. (CCRA.R.6)