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Writing is an integral part of communication in the sciences, which allows an effective exchange of ideas, observations, and results within any scientific field's community and to the general public. However, when writing in science courses is needed, students are often left to determine how to write their ideas and observations without much instruction on what makes for quality scientific writing. This is apparent in introductory geology courses—taken by both science and non-science majors—where students struggle with the written communication of basic concepts in short answer questions on quizzes and exams. Over the last year, geology and English instructors have taken an interdisciplinary approach to helping students better understand writing conventions in introductory geology lecture courses. By working on revising the language of instructor prompts and rubrics, and by also aiding students in the evaluation and revisions of their own in-class written compositions, students learned genre-specific writing practices in preparation for their exams. Students' exam responses were analyzed for correlation of common mistakes, and the instructors used this data to shape future instruction. Determining common pitfalls will help us to apply these methods to courses beyond introductory levels and in other STEM fields.