The red pen has long been a symbol of correction and instruction. Professors use it to highlight items that need to be changed, striking fear into the hearts of their students. You might miss the feeling of that pen in your hand, not to mention its ability to clearly mark portions of an assignment, when students submit assignments electronically through Blackboard. Thankfully, Blackboard’s inline grading process is a red pen for the electronic age.

Using Inline Grading

Access the Inline Grading tool by clicking ‘comment’ when grading an assignment. This toolbar will appear on the top left of the assignment window. Here’s what it looks like in Firefox (it looks slightly different depending on your browser):

The Inline Grading toolbar in Firefox.

The Three Types of Comments

The first option for marking up a student’s paper, Comment, allows you to add comments in three different ways, Point Comment, Area Comment, and Text Comment.
The comment menu choices.

1. **Point Comment** puts a red ‘flag’ in the text to direct the students to a specific point. After selecting Point Comment, click to insert the point flag.

   An example of a Point Comment.

2. **Area Comment** works the same way, but lets you draw a box around an area.

   An example of an Area Comment.

3. **Text Comment** allows you to highlight text by clicking and dragging. When you release the mouse button a comment box will appear on the right-hand side for you to type your comments.

   An example of a Text Comment.

   When you select Text Comment, the Highlight tool color options appear to the right of the toolbar. Change the highlight tool color by clicking on the yellow, orange, green, or blue box.

   The toolbar with the Highlight tool options displayed.
The Draw Tool

The draw tool lets you ‘draw’ on the paper in four colors. Again, color boxes appear to the right of the toolbar.

The toolbar with the Draw tool options displayed.

When your drawing is finished, Blackboard will give you an opportunity to cancel and try again or accept the image.

The final step when using the Draw tool.

The Highlight, Text, and Strikeout Tools

The next three options are highlight, text, and strikeout. The highlight tool allows you to highlight text without making a comment. The Text button lets you add text anywhere on the page. The strikeout button changes the font style strike out.

An example showing highlighted text, text, and strikeout text.

Deleting Editing Marks

Right click on a drawing, highlight, or section of strikeout to delete it.

An example of how to remove strikeout.
For comments, a delete option appears in the lower right.

![Image of comment with delete option]

How to delete or reply to a comment.

**Inline Grading, a Helpful Addition to the Blackboard Toolbox**

Using the inline grading tool won’t stop you from using the ‘Grader Feedback’ box on the right hand side of the screen or providing a number grade. If you’re missing your red pen or your students want more precise feedback, give the inline grading tool a try. I think you’ll find it feels familiar.