

COLLIN COLLEGE

**ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT
SOURCE
BOOK**

Peer Review

2018-19

Introduction

Peer review is one of the most important tools for students to learn more about their own work through reviewing the writing of their peers. While useful, instituting effective peer review strategies may be sometimes difficult, as students need to learn and then employ effective framework language for peer review to be successful. There are several ways to approach peer review in the classroom, and students often benefit from trying out new kinds, and then over the semester, helping the instructor decide which kind works best.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Keep in mind that each class has its own personality, and some classes work better with some types of peer review over other types.
- Keep a conversation open with students over the course term about what is working and what is not working in peer review via group discussion and/or private conversation.
- Talk to students about your own positive and negative experiences working with others on your writing.
- Some studies suggest that what many instructors may see as idle chit chat is actually a critical tool in the early weeks of peer review. Because writing and peer review are social acts, students often feel uncomfortable sharing their writing with others. Keep students on track, but also keep in mind that writing and our discussion of writing can be improved when students get to know one another and feel more comfortable in the classroom during the first weeks of the course. Many students at Collin have never shared writing before, and many feel self-conscious and nervous about their writing abilities.

Types of Peer Review

Small Groups

- o Most groups work well with 3-4 students, depending on the length of the class.
- o Some instructors provide worksheets with specific questions that can help groups stay focused
- o Some instructors let the group set the agenda and manage time/work
- o Some instructors work closely inside a group, while others walk around and manage work. Working closely with a group helps model best practices for group dynamics.
- o Novelty peer review: Some instructors use creative spins on the peer review process to engage students. For example, the *American Idol* peer review asks for students in groups to take on the roles of a cynic, a cheerleader, and an expert. You can play a YouTube clip from the early seasons of the show to model this.

Switching drafts

- o Anonymous drafts swaps with no names: Have students bring in drafts with no name. Mix up drafts and pass around.
- o Round Robin: Students swap drafts, comment (using specific questions), and switch out new drafts as other classmates finish. This takes up a 50 or 75 minute class period. If time permits (especially in a 75-minute or longer class), ask students to write down trends they saw with essays on the board as they finish up. You can have a helpful conversation about general issues the class is seeing in the final minutes of class.

All-Class Workshop

- o One or two students read his/her work for the class. Students are required to fill out review sheets and hand them back to the writer. Writer and instructor can ask specific questions and facilitate a conversation about the essay. The instructor can help students see the connections to their own essays.

Homework peer review

- Assign peer review as homework. The value of this approach is that students often give the essay more time and effort. Require hand-written notes and an overall evaluation of the essay, or a specific worksheet in conjunction with the assignment.

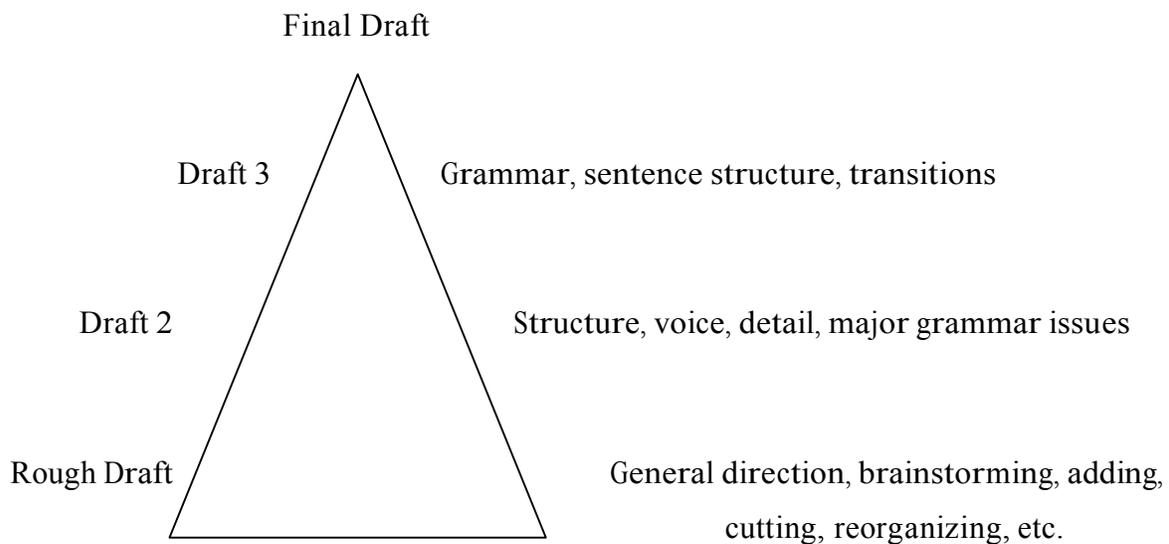
Technology and peer review

- If you are teaching in online or in a computer classroom, you may have even more room to experiment with peer review. Computer labs offer the chance for students to use highlighting, track changes, and other strategies to comment on a writer's work.
- Online instructors commonly use Turnitin's PeerMark function, Canvas email, the Journal tool, or the Wiki tool as a platform for sharing writing and commenting on writing.

Peer Workshops: An Example Handout for Students

On a first draft, there are certain kinds of features of the writing that are more important than others. That is, grammar issues in a first draft are less important than larger issues such as:

- Does the writing adhere to the assignment?
- Does the writer provide a logical organization to the material?
- Are there confusing aspects to the writing?
- What is working well in the draft?
- What direction would you suggest the writer take?
- Focus on specific questions/problems the writer brings up in the author's note.



Useful feedback is the key here. *What is not useful?*

- "This is great!"
- "I think you did a nice job. Good luck,"
- "Wow, I wish my essay was as good as yours."
- "I'm not a good writer, so I can't offer you any advice."

I've seen variations of these kinds of responses over the years and they leave writers frustrated because they are empty comments. Nice, yes, but not very helpful. These kinds of responses do not reflect an active, thoughtful engagement with the text.

Do not over generalize a response. Here is a particularly bad example --and yes, it's real: "**Over all it's not too shabby, but I think your meat and potatoes are looking a little scanty. You could definitely use a lot more material!!**" This response fails on a number of levels, but certainly begs questions and needs a lot more specifics to be useful to a writer. Don't try to be overly cute or amusing in your responses...again, it can come off wrong.

Useful strategies for responding to writers & being a critical reader/responder:

- **Summarize/Say back:** Here is what I see this saying... [This is useful because sometimes the overall point of an essay maybe lost, and the writer may not see this.]
- **Responding:** As I read this paragraph, I...
- **Pointing:** What seems most important here is...What seems to be missing here is...
- **Extending:** You could also apply this to... What would happen if you added...
- **Encouraging:** This section works for me because....
- **Suggesting:** If I were you, I would add.... You could move this paragraph....
- **Soliciting:** Could you say more here about ?
- **Connecting:** In my experience, this When I read an article about this, the author
 - made the point that...
- **Evaluating:** The opening is well done..... The conclusion seems weak to me because it does not extend all of the point that you make in the essay...
- **Counter-arguing:** Some may arguethat...
- **Questioning:** What do you mean here? This (point, idea, phrase, etc.) is confusing to me, could you do more to explain or rephrase for clarity?

Helpful advice:

- As you listen to a draft being read, take notes so you remember what to comment on later.
- Pay attention to details, always refer to the writer's text—discuss what's in the essay: sentences, paragraphs or pages.
- Be specific as you discuss the draft, especially as we move from draft 1 to draft 2.
- Respond to your peers as you want them to respond to you.

- Be selfish: ask the questions you want answers to as you work on your essay.
- *You make the final decision.* The point of workshops is not to force you into any particular decision about your work, but rather to give you a lot of ideas...to “test drive” your essay. You own the decisions and the ultimate “fate” of your work.

Notes on Creating Peer Review Handouts:

- Use open questions that ask students to write in full sentences. Use “yes” or “no” questions sparingly with a specific purpose. For example, if a student does not have a thesis, a “no, there is no thesis” can be powerful feedback. Follow-up questions are ideal here.
- Ask questions that focus students on specific goals for the draft workshop, depending on which stage of the writing process you are at. Having specific, focused goals for the peer review allows the class to pay particular attention to rhetorical concepts that are important to the project at that particular phase of the drafting process.
- Keep the questions limited to the time-at-hand and for the size of the groups.
- Ask students to refer to page/paragraphs and to quote from the student draft.
- Ask students to make connections to their own writing.
- Make students sign their names and be responsible for their comments.
- Optional: have writers review the feedback on worksheets.

Workshop Essay 1:

Reviewer: _____ Title: _____ Author _____

1. Record the author's thesis here:
2. Discuss the strength and weakness of the thesis.
3. Does the author introduce the topic and briefly define the topic in the beginning of the paper? If so, what could be improved in this area?
4. Examine the examples given. Select one to analyze. Why is this example a good example? Or, why was this example not completely effective?
5. Does the author discuss the significance of the topic within the broader concerns of society? If not, what should the author do to add to this work?
6. Look at the organization. Seriously consider what might need to be MOVED around or EXPANDED to improve the essay. Make at least two substantial suggestions for organization. What would you like to know more about?
7. How could the author make the evidence provided more sufficient? (EX. For films, use quotes. EX. For paintings, use research about the author. EX. For cartoons, use the five stages. EX. For the Symbol, Cite the research more appropriately.
8. Did the author fully cite the sources? IF you have any questions about this area at all, point them out to the author. Highlight areas that are probably from a source.
9. Does the conclusion seem to have an argumentative edge. In other words, the paper should not just be informative. The paper should argue something. Discuss three ways the paper could be changed to be more of an argument. Discuss ways that MLA Style and editing should be improved

Author's notes

This type of fill-in sheet is ideal for essays in-process. Instructors can fit the templates to specific assignments and your goals for the class period. This activity can give you the freedom to let students work out a verbal, interactive peer review without having to be as tied to writing down specific responses on a worksheet. Writers work from what they write to focus attention to problem areas in the peer review.

Before starting today's workshop, write a note to your group that follows this pattern:

At the last workshop I _____

So after that, I _____

When I started reading secondary research I found _____

So then I _____

Now that I have a rough draft I am pleased with _____

But I am still frustrated with _____

I really hope my group can help with _____

And I may need to ask my professor about _____

Once in your groups, listen to the author read his or her note to the group and the rough draft.

Directive and Facilitative Comments

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Below are lists of possible directive and facilitative comments. When peer-reviewing, your job is to avoid making directive comments. Facilitative comments tend to be far more valuable for the writer, as they are more likely to encourage substantive revision. Facilitative comments are all about your experience as a *reader*, as opposed to a critic, teacher, or copy editor. Most writers want *readers*, not copy editors. Directive comments tend to transfer authority from writer to reader; but facilitative comments are designed to preserve your control as a writer. Remember that facilitative comments must contain clear reference points for the reader. **QUOTE** the writer's words in your facilitative comments to give the writer specific feedback. Comments that do not clearly reflect the work are useless for the writer.

Directive Comments	Facilitative Comments
<p><u>Directive Statements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Change this word <input type="checkbox"/> Move this sentence to paragraph one. <input type="checkbox"/> Check your spelling 	<p><u>Facilitative First Person Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I'm confused by this word (indicate which word and then explain why it confuses you) <input type="checkbox"/> I feel lost here because_____. <input type="checkbox"/> I get confused in this section. When you say _____, I lose track of what you're saying, because_____. <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know what this sentence means. <input type="checkbox"/> It doesn't fit with the rest of the sentence because_____.
<p><u>Directive Questions (Actually indirect directive statements):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Can you find a better word? <input type="checkbox"/> Can you move this to the conclusion? <input type="checkbox"/> Shouldn't this word be _____? <input type="checkbox"/> Don't you really mean _____? <input type="checkbox"/> Have you tried spelling and grammar check? 	<p><u>Facilitative Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What is the purpose of this paragraph? I think you might mean_ , but I'm not sure, because . <input type="checkbox"/> What does this word mean? (indicate the word in your comment) <input type="checkbox"/> How did you arrive at this conclusion? <input type="checkbox"/> I'm confused by your writing here because _____. <input type="checkbox"/> Do you really believe this claim? I'm having trouble believing you because_____.
<p><u>Teacherly comments of praise that don't lead the writer anywhere:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Great paper! <input type="checkbox"/> This is excellent! <p><u>Meaningless one-word comments that don't</u></p>	<p><u>Comments that open up the paper or lead the writer in new directions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I find your paper fascinating. It makes me think of_____. <input type="checkbox"/> This image reminds me of_____. <input type="checkbox"/> Have you considered applying your theory

help anyone:

- Confusing
- Interesting
- Explain
- Excellent
- Elaborate

to_____.

- Why do you believe this claim you're making? What's the background here?