

## Peer review

*ENG 180, Section 040, Bradley Dilger*

Peer evaluation is a critical method for improving writing in school and in the workplace. Most documents which are published undergo several levels of peer review—some anonymous, some involving direct contact.

Like all peer review, the large goal of today's activity is helping your partner improve his or her work. Some reviews are focused on particular elements. (Does this essay follow a certain format? Is the language clear and correct? Is the information presented accurate?) But most are general. It's often hard to figure out where to start, so here's a method that will help.

For this review, you will work directly with one other person.

### **Part one**

Read each other's draft essays, and discuss them briefly.

With your essays in mind, review the assignment with your partner and establish five important components for evaluation—like our “writing words” from last Thursday. Avoid those listed below.

Write out these criteria and submit them to me before beginning the next part of this review.

### **Part two**

Keith Hjortshoj identifies these characteristics of successful writing:

- it is a thoughtful response to a question, not an empty formal exercise (39);
- it usually has a beginning, middle, and end—not necessarily an introduction, body, and conclusion (41);
- “a good essay is a vehicle for thought that moves from a clear point of departure, in a certain direction, toward a destination” (45).

Evaluate how well your partner's draft essay satisfies the five criteria you've set out, and these three as well. Be specific and detailed—“yes, yes, the beginning, no, yes, the word choice” will earn you no points. Ask me for help as necessary.

- 1-5. How well does the essay satisfy the five expectations *you* developed for review? Explain in detail and make suggestions for improvement.
6. Is the draft thoughtful? Does it make you think? Point out the most thought-provoking and interesting sentences. Does it seem empty or overly formal? Does it seem like the writer cares about his or her work? Why or why not?
7. Does the essay have a good beginning, middle, or end, as defined by Hjortshoj? Why or why not? Comment on these parts of the essay. Which is the strongest? What could be done to improve them?

8. Does the draft, overall, meet Hjortshoj's definition of a good essay? Why or why not? If not, how can it be improved?
9. Conclude with any other comments or suggestions you have.

### **General guidelines**

- ✓ This review is the first you will get for your draft. Mine will be the second.
- ✓ While you are expected to point out difficulties and make suggestions for improvement, try to praise your partner's work as well. Be honest, but don't be cruel.
- ✓ Don't defend your writing—keep quiet and listen to what your partner says about your essay. If you don't understand his or her critique, ask questions—but don't try to explain away problems found in your writing.
- ✓ Professional reviewers use a system of proofreaders marks to annotate writing they are editing. You don't need to do that; just try to be consistent.
- ✓ Number the paragraphs of your partner's work from start to finish to make commenting on the review easier. ("In paragraph six, you begin...")
- ✓ Write down (or type out) your review as much as possible—discussions are great, but written critique is best. If you use the computers, mind the directions for saving work I mentioned last week.
- ✓ I am happy to help you and your partner at any time.

### **Expectations**

*Please note: dates are specific to the how-to draft review, 1/30/2007.*

If done well, peer review is challenging and time-consuming. You will need all of the class period today and some time before Thursday. Additionally, I will give you a few minutes at the end of class Thursday to read your partner's review of your work and ask questions if you don't understand what he or she wrote.

You need to do whatever work is necessary today to ensure you can turn in a finished review Thursday—read the essay carefully, exchange contact information, discuss preliminary points for improvement, etc.

This review is worth 15 points. I will give more points to those whose reviews are exemplary. Reviews which are not a sincere effort will earn no points. So the more you help, the better for you.

On Thursday, February 1, you must **bring two printed copies of your review to class**; one for me and one for your partner.