Making Peer Review Work for You

Tips:

- Limit the number of items students are focusing on in their peer’s paper.
- Provide students with concrete tasks in writing. Otherwise, students will default to either marking grammatical errors and/or useless positive feedback (like smiley faces)
- Ask students to sign their names to their peer review and turn it in with final draft so that students feel accountable for being both givers and receivers of feedback.

HIGHER ORDER CONCERNS

Non-evaluative Exercises

To help students see if they are conveying their argument clearly: Read your peers paper and then write his/her argument/thesis in 1-2 complete sentences.

To work on the introduction: As a class read a model/successful introduction and identify the essential “moves,” such as: raise a question, identify why the question is worth pursuing, and provide a road map. Identify these moves in your peer’s draft.

To work on the summary of a source (either stand alone or in a paper): As a class use a model to identify the elements of a successful summary, such as: identifies the name of the author and the text, presents author’s argument at the outset, defines key concepts, explains sub-points, provides examples when necessary, integrates quotations sparingly, uses paraphrases effectively. Mark these moves in your peer’s summary.

To help students reorganize a paper or revise the argument so that it reflects the paper’s development, use reverse outline or gloss. On a separate sheet of paper:

1. write the overarching argument/thesis in 1-2 complete sentences
2. number the paragraphs
3. identify the idea/point of each paragraph in 1 complete sentence

To help students see if they are relying too heavily on quotations or summary or if they are not including enough analysis and reflection: Using multi-colored “clicky” pens or highlighters ask students to highlight the following in their peer’s paper: quotations-blue; summary-red/pink; analysis/reflection-green.

To identify unsuccessful paraphrase: Author of paper should bracket moments in his/her paper where he/she is paraphrasing and then bracket the passage in the original text he/she is paraphrasing. Peer should highlight words student writer uses from original text.
Evaluative Exercises

To help students write better arguments or thesis statements:

To help students see where they are and are not meeting the expectations of the assignment:

- Ask students to use the assignment or rubric to assess their peers work.
- Use the assignment sheet to name one thing your peer has done well and one thing that needs work.

To identify gaps in development: Identify places where your peer could elaborate or identify gaps in your peer’s logic or development.

To assess organization and signposting, add these steps to the reverse outline:

1. assess topic sentences: do they effectively frame paragraphs?
2. assess structure: do the paragraphs flow logically? How could the paper be better organized?

LOWER ORDER CONCERNS

Note: Proofreading exercises should be completed right before the paper is due. There is no reason to proofread an earlier draft since substantial changes will (should) be made.

For grammar and punctuation issues: Provide students with top ten errors and ask them to identify patterns of error in the first 2-3 pages of their peers’ paper using this list. For example, misuse of capitalization or missing commas. (Do one together first.)

For citation issues: Print out the relevant section from the OWL’s APA or MLA guidebook and ask students to assess one another’s use of in-text citations or their reference/works cited pages. Have them underline rather than correct errors, so that each student has to correct his/her own error.

To combat dropped or drive-by quotations: Ask students to highlight quotations that are not embedded in students own words. Provide students with a list of verbs for introducing sources so that they may revise drive-bys.