

## Peer Review: How to Read Your Colleagues' Work

(adapted from *Tomorrow's Professor Mailing List* at *The Stanford Center for Teaching and Writing*  
<http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/posting.php?ID=940>)

Re-visioning our writing never happens in isolation. Not only do texts we read prompt us to see our own words in a new way, but so does feedback from our readers. In this class, we will learn how to give and receive feedback on our drafts through a process called *peer review*.

When we peer review, we practice close reading. However, we may find ourselves inclined to only do one or two things when we read someone else's work: pick out weak claims, for example, or perceive logic problems. To counteract this kind of specialization, the following offers a repertoire of ways of reading and responding. Here are a handful of examples:

1. **Favorite Sentence.** Ask the writer to look over his own piece and mark his favorite sentence; this motivates careful re-reading. Then, do the same yourself.
2. **Juicy Verbs.** Trade drafts, circle all the verbs in a section or passage, and suggest more informative ones. Sharpening verbs sharpens thinking and also helps develop a vocabulary appropriate to the task at hand.
3. **Curiosity Response.** Read each other's work, marking places that provoke a desire or need for more information or discussion. In the margin near such moments of curiosity, the reader should say or ask what she'd like to know more about.
4. **Quicksand Moment.** Trade drafts, and identify the most difficult part, the one that's confusing, dense, gets them stuck. Reflect and write on what causes the difficulty. The most difficult passage in a text may be the paradoxically promising site where your partner's thinking can be seen developing.
5. **The Believing and Doubting Game.** Read the draft twice, first as a Believer, and then as a Doubter. Believer: "Try to believe everything in the piece, even if you disagree or find it crazy. At least pretend to believe it. Be your partner's friend and ally and give more evidence, arguments, and ideas to help her make her case better." Doubter: "Try to doubt everything in the piece, even if you love it. Take on the role of antagonist and find all the arguments that can be made against your partner. Pretend to be someone who ~~hates~~ has issues with his writing. What would he notice?" (Note: this becomes much more important in the Research Revision)

Remember, you can also use all of these prompts as guides for your annotated reading!

### **Rhetorical Analysis Peer Review**

Read your partner's draft actively, using the above peer review strategies. Read with a pen in hand. Don't worry about correcting grammar or cosmetic issues. Focus on big-picture concerns, the most important issues. And focus on conveying your experience as a reader.

Your name:

Whose essay you are reading:

1. Complete these sentences:

The *rhetorical choice* the reader is exploring is \_\_\_\_\_ and their reason for exploring it is...

The most interesting idea in this essay is:

2. Answer the following:

Is the motive of the essay – *why the problem is interesting or important* – made clear at the beginning of the essay? Does the first paragraph help you understand what this essay is going to be about?

Yes/ No / Sort of

Does the writer provide sufficient background to his or her central topic?

Yes / No / Sort of

Are all the quotes properly attributed?

Yes / No / Sort of

Is there a clear reason for the quotes' presence in the essay?

Yes / No / Sort of

Is there logical organization throughout the paper? Does the writer through the different sections of his/her argument, instead of creating a grocery list or a series of orphan assertions?

Yes / No / Sort of

3. Choose one of the above points to which you answered “No” or “Sort of” and suggest a revision that would solve this problem. Give the writer concrete advice. So, for example, if there is a problem with the structure of the essay, suggest a paragraph that could be moved or cut. If the source's projects aren't clear, suggest how the writer might make it clearer (explaining in more detail, providing summary, etc.).

#### SAMPLE WORKS CITED

King, Martin Luther. “I Have A Dream.” *The River Reader*. Ed. Joseph Trimmer. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2013. 403-408. Print.

King, Martin Luther. “Letter From A Birmingham Jail.” First printed as “The Negro Is Your Brother” in *The Atlantic Monthly*. vol. 212, no. 2, 1963, pp. 78 - 88.

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