

I purposely never use the same peer review twice in a semester for a few reasons. **First**, no two people learn the same way, so I've found that while one peer review activity may work for some, it leaves others confused or dissatisfied with the peer review process. By changing it up I have a higher likelihood of connecting with each of my students at least once. **Secondly**, by doing a wide variety I feel I provide my students with a collection of tools they can take with them beyond English 101, thus enabling them, hopefully, to use when they have to write and review their own papers. **Lastly**, who wants to do the same thing over and over again? Definitely not me...and I'm the one teaching the class! Consequently, the variety of peer review activities not only keeps my students engaged, but also keeps class interesting for me.

One thing to be aware of is that I rarely allow students to just pass their papers to the left or right. Why? Because oftentimes they sit next to their friends and most friends are "nicer" to the paper if they know the writer. Plus, by me collecting and redistributing, there is a sense of detachment and a veil of anonymity so a peer reviewer doesn't have to be afraid of hurting someone's feelings...the writer doesn't know who has their paper!

In addition, I also model the activity for the student by giving examples of what I expect to see in regards to feedback. Left to their own devices, I'm not confident the students would fully understand and get everything out of these peer reviews.

So what is this voodoo that I do?

Arts and Crafts Organization

This activity can take most of the class period. The purpose of this is to take the paper out of the writer's hand and put the power of organization into the reader's.

Supplies: One complete draft printed on one side. I provide a letter-size envelope, tape, scissors, and blank paper (optional) for students.

As students trickle into class I tell them to start cutting their papers at their paragraphs. They are required to remove the header, title, Works Cited, and page numbers so these visual clues aren't given to the reader. Tape is then used to connect paragraphs split over two pages. These paragraphs are shuffled up (so they're not in perfect order) and placed into an envelope with the writer's name on the outside (the paragraphs don't have to be folded to fit perfectly into the envelope, the envelope's only purpose is to keep the slips of paper together).

Once completed, envelopes are gathered and redistributed. Once everyone has a different envelope I tell them their job is to read through each of the paragraphs and figure out what order they, the reader, think the paper should be put in; taping the paragraphs to each other in the order they determine (this should ultimately create a long stream of paper). I also inform students that, if they think a paragraph is trying to do too much, they are allowed to cut the paragraph up into smaller chunks if needed. The reader is also allowed to take a paragraph and put it aside; taping it to the end of the paper under a "Redundant/Unnecessary" header after the rearranged paper has been completed.

With no visual cues the student reader has no preconceived notion of what the writer is trying to say and oftentimes paper organizations are changed to what makes more sense to the reader, not the writer.

Once the paper stream has been constructed, student readers are to write the author's name of the paper at the top. Next,

students pass the paper streams to the left. The new student numbers the paragraphs and, after reading the reorganized paper, writes a brief note to the writer telling them if they think any of the paragraphs should be rearranged, and providing the numbered order. In addition, the 2nd reviewer has to answer the following questions:

- What do you think was the strongest argument in the paper? Why?
- What do you think was the *weakest* argument in the paper? Why?
- How would you strengthen the weakest argument?
- Were you left with any questions after reading the essay?
- What would you improve to make the essay more effective?

A number of students have commented that, although they were frustrated and confused when they got their rearranged paper back, this ultimately helped them see how disorganized their paper was to someone who didn't have their same knowledge level and/or know what the writer was trying to say.

I Heard, I Noticed, I Wondered

Adapted from: <http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/peer.html>

I use this to enable students to interact with and consider a paper in a number of ways, thus allowing for the writer to get a variety of feedback.

*****See handout on page four**

Examining the WHOLE Paper

This activity gets graders out of the comfort zone of focusing only on editing marks, and looks at global issues within the paper.

***** See handout on page five**

Intro, Topic Sentences, Conclusion

The purpose of this is to help limit wandering off-topic and maintain focus throughout a paper.

Supplies: One printed copy of student's draft (usually the second draft). I provide crayons (students' pick 2 different colored crayons for this exercise).

PART 1: Papers are collected and redistributed and the reader is told to begin by reading ONLY the introduction and, with one colored crayon, the reader is to color what *they* think the thesis is. I explain to my students that a thesis is a "promise" the author makes to the reader about what the paper is going to argue.

Once completed, readers are to, in one paragraph (5-8 sentences) state: 1) what the paper will be about and why they think that, 2) what the writer's stance is on the argument, and 3) list any possible counter arguments to the author's thesis. If the students are unsure about any of these three things, the reader needs to write WHY they are unsure. For example, a reader may be unable to locate a thesis statement, or what they think the paper is going to be about may not fit the thesis, so compiling a list of counter arguments may be difficult.

Students are then advised to, with a different colored crayon, underline the topic sentence of each paragraph. For each topic sentences, the reader is to write a paragraph stating whether or not they think the topic sentence relates back to the thesis, explain how it supports/further/detracts from the overall thesis, and state what information they think will be in this paragraph. In addition, the reader is to rewrite the topic sentence (whether it is good or bad) so it either relates back to the thesis or provides another option for the writer to use.

After reading the conclusion, the reader states whether or not this effectively sums up the paper and if the topic sentences reinforce/relate to the conclusion.

PART 2: Next, the reader is to read the **entire** paper (without making any notes on it) and write one paragraph stating whether or not the paper kept the "promise" made, based on the introduction, topic sentences, and conclusion, and WHY the reader thinks the "promise" was kept or broken. Lastly, the student is to give two compliments to the author and give three areas where the writer could improve.

I Don't Believe. I Believe!

Adapted from: <http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/>

This activity is to make students aware of counter arguments to their ideas, see if their thesis needs to evolve, thus considering varying perspectives and strengthening their arguments.

Supplies: One printed copy of student's draft.

Pairing students up with someone they do not normally work with, each person is asked to silently read through their

partner's paper doubting every claim the writer makes. They should write down every argument they can make against their partner.

After compiling and talking about the "doubting" list (and to keep fights from breaking out!), partners are then advised to read through the paper again, this time believing every claim and helping them make those arguments even stronger.

I make sure to stress that it doesn't matter whether the students actually believe or doubt each other's arguments; this is role-playing to help strengthen each other's work.

Feedback Grading

This activity is usually a wakeup call for many of the students, especially since this is the first, and currently, only grade they get on a paper. I usually do this activity after students have received feedback from me on at least one of their papers, so student authors know what helpful feedback looks like.

I provide a rubric (similar to the attached Peer Grading (pp. 6-8) and Grading the Feedback (p.9) examples) that either awards recorded points or unrecorded letter grades to the students. I inform the students that a grade will be entered into my grade book and become part of each student's overall grade. Usually uproar ensues with concerns expressed about how "unfair" this can be and worry about their overall grade. I then assure students that they, the writer, will be grading the feedback received from their peer in terms of how helpful and comprehensive it is. Consequently, the student's paper isn't being graded, but the person providing the feedback is being graded.

Because students are aware they are being graded on the feedback they give, I've found that the quality of feedback increases exponentially.

Overall, I've found two things: 1) students *know* what is effective in a paper and usually grade more harshly than I would, and 2) most students, when a perceived "grade" is hanging over them, will give really meaningful and insightful feedback and comments to the writer. I've been impressed many times.

Papers on a Desk

Adapted from: April Strawn, WSU English Instructor

This activity allows a variety of feedback from 3-4 readers, but also allows the reader to remain anonymous, thus increasing the honesty of the peer feedback.

Supplies: Two printed copies of student's draft and students sitting in a large circle with a desk in the center.

Before collecting the student papers, all students are directed to flip the paper over and on the blank back side of their essays, draw a line down the center of the paper (portrait orientation). At the top of the column on the right the student

writes "What I Liked" and at the top of the column on the left, the student writes "What Needs Improvement".

I collect and redistribute the student papers, but writers don't get their own work back. The remaining drafts are put on the desk in the center of the circle.

Readers are given 8 minutes to read the paper (I keep time) and encouraged to mark up the paper (i.e. ask questions, underline what they like, etc.). Admittedly, students are most comfortable with editing, rather than revising feedback. So, in this activity, I allow readers to circle any grammar problems, BUT the reader is not to indicate what is wrong grammatically...that's up to the writer to figure out.

Some students don't/won't get through the entire paper in 8 minutes, so I give a one-minute warning where the peer reviewer needs to stop reading and begin responding on the back of the paper.

****EVERY** reader is required to write one thing they liked and one thing they think needs improvement or could be stronger on the back of the draft they are reading before obtaining a new student's paper.

Some students will, however, be done before the 8 minute time limit. This is where the name of the activity comes in. If students complete their peer review ahead of time, they are to exchange the paper with one from the desk in the center.

This process continues for the entire class time. Often students get feedback from four or five students, which helps the student writers understand what a reader is looking for and expecting in their essays.

Read Aloud

Adapted from: Laura Powers, WSU English Instructor

This activity forces students to face their own writing. Oftentimes they rarely re-read papers and critically analyze what they have said and/or how they have communicated it to a reader.

Supplies: Two printed copies of student's draft. The Bundy Reading Room -- reserved.

Students are allowed, and encouraged to partner with someone they feel comfortable with. I then direct students to find a space in the Bundy Reading Room that both allows the partners to talk loud enough to hear each other while limiting the likelihood of disturbing other partnerships and enables the partners to sit side-by-side.

Students exchange one copy of their paper so each member has a copy of their own paper and a copy of their partner's paper. On the back of their own paper, the author is to write three (3) areas they feel need to be addressed in their essay or what they think they need help with.

Next, students to read their partner's paper **out loud without stopping**. The reader can make a checkmark on the paper

where they have a question or concern to address after reading the essay. The author of the paper being read is to also make notes/marks on the paper where they hear potential problems with their own essay (i.e. clumsy sentence structure, confusing wording, contradictory statements, etc.).

After the paper has been read, the reader and writer are to go back through the essay and talk about any marks made on the essay, by either person, and address the three areas the author originally wanted help with.

Once the paper has been discussed and adequate feedback has been given, the roles are reversed and the second student author listens to their paper being read to them.

Note: Let the teams know when the class is halfway over. Sometimes teams will spend so much time on one paper that the second paper isn't really addressed. Also, if the team finishes before the class period is over, each team member is encouraged to begin revising and rewriting their paper in class, but cannot leave until class is completed.

Revision Letter

I require this activity for EVERY writing assignment they submit to me. It makes students articulate WHY they are(n't) making the revisions decisions they do. It helps me, as an instructor, gauge the understanding of my students and see what areas I need to readdress or have successfully instructed.

Regardless of the type of revision activity my students have done, every student is **required** to complete a revision letter when submitting a draft to me, the instructor.

I explain to the students that I want them to discuss revision, NOT grammar changes. I explain that grammar are surface-level changes, but revisions are thorough, big-pictures changes.

The letter has certain requirements and components to it:

1. ONE page MINIMUM.
2. Single-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman, one-inch margins
3. Format like a letter and begin with a salutation:
Dear Patty, OR Dear Instructor,
4. Paragraphs stating **which** revision suggestions you adopted in your paper and **why**. What did the revision do to the essay?

Because knowing **why** writers do things is oftentimes just as important as the things they do.

5. Paragraph(s) stating revision suggestions and **why** you didn't apply them. What would the suggested revision done to the paper?
6. End with valediction:

**Sincerely,
Your Name**

Peer Review: I Heard, I Noticed, I Wondered

I heard...

As a reviewer, first try to summarize what you think the piece was about. This is the easy part. Tell the writer what you saw as the main idea. *As a writer, listen to this section, and try to hear whether or not you communicated what you were trying to communicate.*

I noticed...

As a reviewer, tell the author about some of the things that attracted your attention. What worked well? What details seemed especially vivid or striking? What will you remember about this paper? *As a writer, think about why the reviewer noticed these things, and how you can make all your writing as effective.*

I wondered...

As a reviewer, did you have any questions when you finished reading? Did you not understand what something meant, or why it was included? Did something bother or disturb you? Did you suspect something might have worked better another way? This section is your chance to ask the writer all these questions. *As a writer, try to answer the reviewer's questions. Look at your writing again, and see if there is any way to make those points clearer to a reader.*

Dear Karina,

When reading your essay, I **heard** that, although you never met your grandfather, you are interested in who he was and what his life was like. He moved to the Dominican Republic from China, got married and had ten children. He opened a successful restaurant, but when the tourists no longer passed by his town, the restaurant went bankrupt.

I **noticed** you showing the relationship between your grandfather's life in China and his life in the Dominican Republic. I also noticed how well you described the sacrifices he made by moving. For example, you went into detail about what his father had been, and about the family he left behind. I noticed that you began the story by telling us why it was important to you, and by making us curious about your grandfather.

Finally, I **wondered** about the Chinese family he left behind. Did he ever contact them again? Did he miss them? I wondered if you could have told us more about that. Also, why did your grandfather just stay at home after his restaurant went bankrupt. I wondered how he was able to support himself, and why he didn't try to open another restaurant. What was your father's relationship to your grandfather? Does your father have the same curiosity about his Chinese heritage that you do?

Thanks for letting me read your paper.

Sincerely,

An interested reader

Now it's YOUR turn. Use both sides of this paper!

Peer Review: Examining the Whole Paper

Author: _____

1. Write a brief narrative (2-3 sentences) that outlines your first impression of the draft.
2. How effectively does the title draw you into the paper? Why?
3. Indicate what you **LIKE** about the draft (positive/encouraging feedback).
4. Is the paper focused? Does it lose focus anywhere? If so, indicate where.
5. What part(s) of the text are especially informative? What information was interesting and/or new to you?
6. Comment specifically on the **introduction**: What is effective about it? What suggestions can you make on how to improve the introduction?
7. What do you think is the author's thesis or main point? How could it be expressed or supported more effectively?
8. In the main body of the paper, are there parts that are confusing? Where would you like more details or examples to help you see what the author means? What parts could use more explanation or definitions?
9. How clear is the writing? If there are places that seem wordy or unclear, how might the author revise to address those problems?
10. How accurate does the information seem? How does the author indicate the sources of statistics and other information that are not common knowledge?
11. Reread the **conclusion**. How well does it tie everything back together? To what extent does it make you want to learn more about this topic?
12. What are the **MAIN WEAKNESSES** of this paper? **SUGGEST** how the writer might improve the text.
13. If there are visual aspects (graphs, charts, pictures, etc.), comment on how (in)effectively they illustrate the point being made. Do the visuals add/detract from the reader's overall understanding of the information?
14. **NEUTRALITY**: Which side of the argument do you think the author agrees with?

This handout is usually spaced to two pages. It has been condensed for the purposes of this handout.

Peer Grade -- Letter Grade

Student: _____

Grader: _____

Answer this honestly. If you are "nice" you'll help your fellow student and give them an honest critique so they can improve their paper.

THIS INTRODUCTION & CONCLUSION...	EXCELLENT	GOOD	NEEDS WORK
TITLE: Is interesting and draws the reader in. <i>More interesting than: "My Final Paper" or "Final Draft"</i>			
INTRO: has an attention-getting opening line/"hook" which makes the reader want to keep reading.			
INTRO: has an "action" sentence (i.e. "In his/her article "(article title)," (the author) <u>action verb</u> (<i>argues, states, asserts, etc.</i>) that...")			
INTRO: has a focused and insightful thesis statement that agrees and/or disagrees and all other paragraphs refer back to this subject.			
CONCLUSION: effectively sums up author's thesis, student's thesis (varying word choice), and student supports within the paper.			
CONCLUSION: tagline relates back to intro's "hook".			

Comments (if you marked the "Good" or "Needs Work" boxes, state how these areas can be improved to make it "Excellent"):

THIS SUMMARY...	EXCELLENT	GOOD	NEEDS WORK
is the appropriate length (2-3¶, 250-350 words)			
is written entirely in the student's own words. Does not plagiarize phrases or sentence structure. Every quote is properly identified as belonging to the author and as a reader you understand that the thoughts and ideas in this paper are the article's author, <u>not</u> the student writer.			
effectively sums up the article and remains neutral with no "I" statements or biased wording.			
properly credits the article as a source with in-text citations (page numbers)			
is coherently organized, with well-developed paragraphs, effectively used attributive tags, and clear transitions between ideas and paragraphs.			

Comments (if you marked the "Good" or "Needs Work" boxes, state how these areas can be improved to make it "Excellent"):

THIS TRANSITION ¶ AND RESPONSE...	EXCELLENT	GOOD	NEEDS WORK
TRANSITION: clearly indicates when summary ends and response begins (first usage of “I” or “me”). Student’s thesis is restated and reworded. (Approximately 2-3 sentences in length)			
RESPONSE: length is appropriate (3+ paragraphs = bulk of paper).			
RESPONSE: effectively uses support to persuasively argue their side. No leaps of thought or reasoning.			
RESPONSE: does not stray off-topic. Arguments and paragraphs relate back to student’s thesis.			
RESPONSE: acknowledges counter arguments, concedes a point, or shows there may be contradictory points of view			

Comments (if you marked the “Good” or “Needs Work” boxes, state how these areas can be improved to make it “Excellent”):

THE WHOLE PAPER ...	EXCELLENT	GOOD	NEEDS WORK
follows format: 3-4 pages, typed, double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1” margins, five-line header is in correct order, page numbering in upper right corner, and Works Cited is correct.			
is coherently organized, with clear transitions between ideas and paragraphs. Article was critically read and thoughtfully responded to.			
properly uses attributive tags and cites author’s ideas and words. Text is NOT PLAGARIZED.			
was interesting and engaging to read.			
uses correct grammar and mechanics; is free from errors, typos, and careless mistakes.			
Overall, if I were to give this paper a grade right now, it would receive the grade of (A, B, C, D, F): <i>This grade is for the writer’s information only and will not be entered in the grade book.</i>			

Comments (if you marked the “Good” or “Needs Work” boxes, state how these areas can be improved to make it “Excellent”):

Peer Grade -- Points

Formatting & Length: Yes No

Paper meets formatting requirement (5-line header, 12 point font, Times New Roman, 1" margins, double-spaced, no extra space between paragraphs, page numbers, Works Cited, etc.) & **MINIMUM WORD COUNT**.

_____ / 2: Title

- [2] Engaging and catchy title; draws the reader's interest
- [1] Adequate title, but doesn't make the reader want to keep reading.
- [0] Boring title (i.e. "Essay 1," "Formal Argument," etc.)

_____ / 2: Introduction

- [2] From opening "hook", the introduction is engaging and very effectively introduces topic by putting it in context.
- [1] Introduction satisfactorily and adequately introduces topic, but does not engage reader and create the desire to continue reading.
- [0] Introduction doesn't effectively introduce topic.

_____ / 2: Thesis

- [2] Clearly states author's stance regarding controversial subject, while acknowledging there is ***another mode of thought*** regarding the subject (2-part thesis). The reader clearly knows where the author stands on the topic.
- [1] Attempt at a thesis. Reader has a general idea what the paper is arguing, but it is not clear.
- [0] No discernable argument/stance stated. Reader has no idea where paper is going.

_____ / 4: Body and Support

- [3-4] Varying viewpoints addressed, concessions made, and body is engaging and very effectively supports argument.
- [2] Body satisfactorily supports argument; some rhetorical strategies used; minor counterarguments addressed.
- [1] Weakly supports argument; few or no rhetorical strategies used; little addressing of differing points of view.
- [0] Body is incomplete, confusing, or very difficult to understand; no use of rhetorical strategies.

_____ / 2 Conclusion

- [2] Conclusion very effectively restates thesis, support, counterarguments, and relates back to opening "hook". Change has occurred in reader's thoughts/belief regarding the subject.
- [1] Conclusion satisfactorily completes argument; decent final thoughts. Does not relate back to opening "hook".
- [0] Conclusion weakly finishes argument; final ideas trail off, lacking persuasion.

_____ / 2: Mechanics and Grammar

- [2] Flawless to almost perfect; a few minor mechanical or grammatical errors.
- [1] Poor; numerous mechanical or grammatical errors; essay appears sloppy.
- [0] Unreadable; mechanical and grammatical errors throughout.

_____ / 3: Creativity and Style

- [3] Very unique topic; very creatively written in a vibrant, powerful style.
- [2] Good topic; some creativity displayed; style is mostly straightforward.
- [1] Cliché or predictable topic; little to no creativity demonstrated; style is dull.

_____ / 3: Overall Clarity, Logic, Persuasiveness, and Research

- [3] Essay is very clear and logical from beginning to end; makes a very convincing argument; incorporates sources from research very effectively.
- [2] Essay is mostly clear and logical; makes a fairly solid argument, but some counterarguments could be better addressed; sources from research used.
- [1] Essay is difficult to understand; problems with logic; doesn't make an effective argument; sources from research used, but ineffectively.

TOTAL POINTS: _____ / 20

Grading the Feedback

Name of Person Giving Feedback/Grading: _____

YOUR Name: _____

Write a complete paragraph response to each of the following questions and circle the points you would award for each area:

1. How were the comments on the paper? Were they well thought out and explained? Did they require additional verbal communication with the peer reviewer for you to understand what was needed or meant?

Poor		Fair		GREAT!
1	2	3	4	5

2. How well did your grader do FACE-TO-FACE explaining and discussing your paper? Were they able to successfully articulate the reason for their comments? Were all of your questions answered clearly?

Poor		Fair		GREAT!
1	2	3	4	5

3. Overall, how helpful were the comments? Did they address higher level components (i.e. thesis, organization, claims and support, areas of confusion, etc.) or did the grader primarily mark areas of superficial/lower-level editing mistakes? How do you think this will help your revision process?

Poor		Fair		GREAT!
1	2	3	4	5