

## Peer Review: General Guidelines and Tips

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Golden Rule: Do unto other writers what you would like discerning and helpful readers to do unto you.

Read drafts in advance of the workshop: To maximize the opportunity for peer review feedback, read drafts in advance of the workshop. Spend time in your peer review group discussing the draft, not reading it for the first time.

You're not alone: It's easy for writers to feel isolated and to sense that their struggles with writing are personal deficiencies. That's not the case. Working with peer readers can help you appreciate that your struggles are shared by nearly everyone else, and that what you see as a deficit is more accurately just a process of getting used to the "moves" of a new discourse community.

Keep the "Big Picture" in mind: Offer global or macro advice (approach, structure, overall line of reasoning) before spending time on more local or micro issues (grammar and style). Pay attention to how you, the reader, are able to "track" the discussion. Use the feedback sheets designed for each peer review session for guidance on the issues to address.

Honor the reactions of your audience: Peer response brings you into contact with a real, live audience who can respond to you in real time. Understanding how readers read can help you write in ways that serve your reader. A sure sign of progress is your ability to shift from "writer-oriented" prose to "reader-oriented" prose.

The believing game and the doubting game: Read your team members' drafts in at least two ways: supportive and skeptical. Either approach, in isolation, can be unproductive. Together, they offer constructive feedback.

For problems, find solutions: Even as you identify issues or problems in a draft, consider how you can help the author address or solve those problems.

Sort out contradictory advice: When you hear from multiple readers, as well as writing and research mentors, it's not uncommon to receive different, even contradictory, advice. Your job is to appreciate that each piece of contradictory advice can have some truth to it, and to sort out that advice given your own judgment. Don't be shy to ask for clarification about those very contradictions.

The problem of knowing too much: We can sometimes be our own worst editors because we know what we are trying to say and we don't actually see what is on the page. As we reread our own work, we often are just reminding ourselves of what we meant to say. Readers can show us what is really on the page. Peer readers may know less than an author does, but they can offer valuable advice for precisely this reason.

Develop a plan for revision and further work: As the feedback on a draft draws to a close, the author should articulate how he or she will draw on that advice in the next draft. Articulate specific "action items" for writing and research. To begin with, focus on high profile "macro" advice, not smaller sentence-level issues.