



How to Conduct a Peer Review

A-State Online Writing Center

Many papers in academia are subject to peer review, including most of the journal articles you will research while working within your discipline. Your work and your peers' work may eventually fall into this category because some professors assign peer reviews in their classes. Conducting a peer review may seem like a daunting task, but if you know what to look for, they can be quite simple. Below you will find helpful tips on what to search for while reviewing someone else's paper and also learning about how your paper will be reviewed.

Why do we use peer reviews?

Peer reviews are used to help fact check the research presented in the article and analyze the methods used to get that result. They are also used to define strengths and weaknesses within the text, acknowledge where the text does/doesn't fit the assignment prompt, show troubled spots where sentences or words need to be changed to reinforce the impact of your ideas and to ensure the evidence provided adds to the ethos of the text.

These components are incredibly important to your success and the success of your peers. Each time a review is conducted, you are improving your critical analysis skills, grammar, ability to incorporate other work with your own, and paper organization skills.

How do I conduct a peer review?

- **Read through the prompt/rubric:**
 - Reading through the prompt will help you understand what the assignment is asking for, who your audience will be, what restraints that professor has laid out for students (i.e., amount of sources required/where the source is acquired from/what medium it is found in), and what the layout should look like.
 - Reading the rubric will show the qualifications the professor is looking for to provide a good grade on the assignment; this will help assess if the writing for the text you're reviewing meets those qualifications or if they need to do something to elevate their writing.
- **Conduct the first read-through of the paper:**
 - During the first read-through, don't mark anything up. Instead, get a feel for their topic, the flow of their text, how arguments are being shaped, the methods they are using to get their results, and if it keeps your interest throughout the whole text. Reading it all the way through the first time will help in seeing the "big picture" being presented to you in that text. Starting out by immediately reviewing it and marking it up will cause you only to view the paper in components and, the "big picture" is lost.
- **Bring highlighters:**
 - Bring four different colors to highlight important sections of the text, such as where the author introduces their ideas, where they incorporate the ideas of others, where they use ethos, pathos, and logos to sway their audience, and where their thesis

statement is. This will help you find and analyze these sections later on, and the color-coding allows you to process and connect the content for each section.

- **Conduct another read through:**

- This time, you will analyze and mark it up. While doing this, you can ask yourself these questions (note that you can also ask yourself these questions while writing a paper too):
 - Is the title of the paper relevant to the text?
 - Is this research question important, and does it add something new to the previous research in this discipline?
 - Are key articles being referenced that would help in providing ethos to the text?
 - What is the author's motivation and end goal for this study?
 - Is the data presented understandably?
 - Are the methods used to gather data suitable for this research?
 - What is the point of this text/why should it matter to the audience?
 - Did the referenced study show what the paper is claiming?
 - Does the paper flow and have connectivity?
 - Are the ideas presented clearly?
 - Is the word choice effective?
 - Is there a balance between their research and the research within the discipline, and do they incorporate other research properly?
 - Are there errors in the research?

- **Take notes:**

- Write down where the **major errors** are located. These include places where quotes/other research are incorporated improperly, organization issues, places where the author veers off topic, places where the argument is weak, places where the assignment isn't met, etc.
- Acknowledge the **moderate errors** such as; where the word choice isn't as effective, where the idea of the sentence isn't being met because of sentence structure, where they struggle with incorporating tables and figures.
- Point them towards the **small errors** such as missing commas, misspelled words, formatting issues, misuse of prepositions, places where they repeat the same word/phrase multiple times, etc.

- **Process the effectiveness of the introduction and conclusion:**

- Take the time to analyze how the author builds their introduction. Make sure it grabs your attention at the very beginning, introduces the topic, gives a summary of the issue needing to be addressed, and has a strong thesis statement that will act as a backbone for the whole text.
- Look at the conclusion to make sure it wraps everything up, connects all the subpoints to the main point, shows the effectiveness of the research, the strengths and weaknesses of the study, and the takeaway from it.

- **Leave positive and negative takeaways:**

- When they do something effective and thoughtful in their text, tell them! Knowing what they did well will make them more receptive to what they didn't do well.

Letting them know the positives will also help them understand how to fix the negatives (i.e., if they make a mistake in a previous paragraph and then provide a stellar example in the next paragraph, lead them to that example to correct the mistake).

- **Leave questions instead of suggestions:**
 - Start asking questions instead of suggesting the author use a specific phrase or word, make a change to their organization, etc.; this allows the author to acknowledge that there is a mistake but make decisions about fixing it. Although they are only a few examples, and there are plenty more questions that one could come up with, these suggestions as questions look like this:
 - Is there another word that would be more effective here?
 - How could you rephrase this sentence but keep the same idea?
 - Would it make more sense for that point to go before this point?
 - Could you give more of an explanation here for your audience?
 - How could you shift this section to stay on topic?
 - Is the more information you could add to the introduction to grab your reader's attention?
 - What other preposition would best fit this phrase?

Works Consulted:

Our tutors consulted the following sources while creating this quick guide:

[https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/5a1eb62e67f405260662a0df/Refreshed-Guide-Peer-Review-Journal.pdf)

[manager/file/5a1eb62e67f405260662a0df/Refreshed-Guide-Peer-Review-Journal.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/5a1eb62e67f405260662a0df/Refreshed-Guide-Peer-Review-Journal.pdf)

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