

How to Give Peer Feedback

When you are asked to read someone's written work and give feedback, there are some best practices to keep in mind.

Know **WHAT** to look for

These questions will tell you what to cover in providing feedback:

1. How accurately does the written work respond to the **assignment instructions**?
2. If the essay is thesis-driven, how easily can you identify the **central thesis**?
Does the thesis strike you as insightful and well-presented?
3. Is the thesis supported by relevant and credible **evidence**?
4. Does the essay seem to follow a coherent plan of **organization**?
5. What does each paragraph contribute to the essay? Are paragraphs fully **developed**? Do paragraphs follow a coherent order?
6. Are words used **precisely**? Do you see any formulations that are especially enjoyable (or confusing)?
7. Does any part of the essay leave you feeling **confused**? How hard do you have to work to make sense of a sentence, paragraph, or section of the essay?
8. What ideas do you have about **how to improve** the writing?

Know **HOW** to give feedback

When it comes time to discuss your feedback, it can be tricky to identify room for improvement in a way that doesn't make the author feel like you're attacking them personally. A little bit of tact can go a long way:

Use the sweet-and-sour approach. Try to say something positive before discussing any errors or deficiencies in the writing.

Talk about the writing, not the person. Instead of saying "you're being confusing," or "you're being unclear," say "*this sentence* is not as precise as it could be" or "*this paragraph* needs more development."

Emphasize your experience as the reader. Remember how subjective the reading experience can be. Try to frame your responses in first-person form:

- I especially like...
- I'm having trouble figuring out...
- I find myself affected by...
- I would like to know more about...
- When I read this part, I feel as if...
- I seem to lose track of...
- I'm not sure I understand...
- I think this paragraph is saying...