

**PEER REVIEWING: A PRIMER**  
**WRT 334, Spring 2017, Dr. Druschke**

***"As a peer reviewer, your job is not to provide answers. You raise questions; the writer makes the choices. You act as a mirror, showing the writer how the draft looks to you and pointing out areas which need attention."***

***-Sharon Williams***

**GUIDELINES FOR PEER REVIEW**

- Read a draft all the way through before you begin to comment on it.
- Give yourself enough time to read and respond.
- If something on the feedback form is unclear, ask the instructor.
- Point out the strengths of the draft.
- When discussing areas that need improvement, **be nice**. Offer **appropriate, constructive** comments from a reader's point of view.
- Make comments **text-specific**, referring specifically to the writer's draft (NO "rubber stamps" such as "awkward" or "unclear" or "vague," which are too general to be helpful).
- Don't overwhelm the writer with too much commentary. Stick to the major issues on the feedback form that are problematic.
- Make sure your suggestions are **reasonable** (i.e., don't suggest that they totally rewrite the paper because you didn't agree with the author's point of view or didn't like the topic).
- If something appears too complicated to write in the commentary, just mention that you have something that you would like to talk to the writer about when you discuss the draft afterwards.
- Before giving your written comments to the author, **reread** your comments to make sure they are clear and make sense.

**APPROPRIATE, CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS**

- Be respectful and considerate of the writer's feelings.
- Use **"I" statements**.
- Offer suggestions, not commands.
- Raise questions from a reader's point of view, points that may not have occurred to the writer.
- Phrase comments clearly and carefully so that the writer can easily understand what needs to be improved.
- Make sure comments are **constructive** and **specific** (not "This paper is confusing. It keeps saying the same things over and over again" but rather "It sounds like paragraph five makes the same point as paragraphs 2 and 3.>").
- **Avoid turning the writer's paper into YOUR paper.**
- Although it might not be on the feedback form, you can always ask the writer if there is something he or she wants you to comment specifically on in the paper.

**EXAMPLES**

NOT HELPFUL: "Your paper makes no sense."

MORE HELPFUL: "I'm having trouble following your argument. Can you explain your main argument to me?"

NOT HELPFUL: "I disagree with your argument. You're wrong, dummy."

MORE HELPFUL: "While I disagree with your argument, you do/do-not support it with strong evidence. You might want to think, though, of addressing my objection which is..."

NOT HELPFUL: "It's great!"

MORE HELPFUL: "I love your clear writing style and your thought-provoking argument. Your evidence could be stronger but, overall, you've written a strong paper."