

## Tips for PEER REVIEW

### Goal of Peer Review

Your goal as a peer reviewer is to help the writer compose the best possible final draft. Direct all your comments toward that end.

### Step One: Identify what needs revision

Read the draft to identify strengths and weaknesses. Concentrate on how the draft strikes you as a reader. With pencil, indicate ideas that confuse you or appear undeveloped, but don't try to *rewrite* anything. You will be most helpful by identifying problems with the structure of the argument and the clarity of expression. Don't spend time on surface features of the writing, such as word choice and punctuation, unless you see serious, recurring errors.

As you read, you may decide to informally outline the structure of the argument. Start by identifying the thesis, then outline the main ideas in the discussion. Outlining helps you see the overall logic of the argument as well as identify the paragraphs that have either no central idea or more than one.

If your professor has provided peer review questions, record your responses after reading the draft. If not, then summarize your responses in an end note to the writer. Begin with positive feedback and then describe the significant weaknesses in the draft.

### Step Two: Helping the writer revise

When you talk with the writer, remember that you are a reader of the draft, not the author. Your task is to help the writer figure out how to construct a clear, substantive final draft. An effective way to accomplish this is to point out the areas that are confusing to you and to ask the writer questions, such as

- "What are you trying to say here?"
- "Can you explain how this point relates to your argument?"
- "How does this evidence support your argument?"

Write down the writer's responses as he or she talks; we often speak much more clearly than we write. By asking questions, you help the writer talk out and clarify what he or she is trying to say.

(Over)

You can also look over your outline together, asking questions such as

- "Is this the best structure for your argument?"
- or
- "Should this paragraph be divided into separate paragraphs?"

If you see ideas that should be placed elsewhere, ask

- "Why did you put this idea here?"
- or
- "Is this topic more closely related to the ideas you discussed earlier?"

## **Remember:**

- Focus on the significant weaknesses first before discussing less critical concerns.
- Don't try to rewrite anything; your job is to point out what the writer needs to revise.
- As a peer reviewer, your job isn't to provide answers. You raise important questions about the draft, and the writer decides how to revise. Be courteous, but be honest as well.

For further discussion of peer reviewing, check with a peer tutor at the Writing Center.