

After leaving college, you will rarely have the opportunity to sit face-to-face with the people who reviewed your writing. The more common practice is to receive written comments from a reviewer, and then make changes based on those comments. As the writer receiving feedback, it can be *extremely* frustrating when the comments you receive are vague, harsh, or reflect that the reviewer didn't actually spend quality time reading your work. The following guidelines are meant to help you grow as a *reviewer* who gives construct feedback.

## Guidelines to keep in mind

Note: this guideline borrows from Pedagogy in Action.

1. **Read the whole document** before you make your first comment. You might find this difficult, but it's good practice to try and see the big picture of the paper so you can offer macro-level comments.
2. **Ask questions!** As a reviewer, you are not expected to fix or change the paper. Rather, it is your role to help your classmate understand how their writing impacts or sits with the reader. Asking questions allows the writer to make some reflections about their choices, and also help them see potential gaps in their writing. Also, asking questions may help the writer see other points that they had not previously considered.
3. **Offer suggestions, not commands.** Be respectful in your word choice and considerate of the writer's feeling. Consider leaving comments about or from the perspective of yourself as the reader, rather than of the writer. For example, a comment such as "I have trouble understanding how paragraph two connects to the previous paragraph. A transition could be helpful" is more considerate than "You didn't connect paragraphs one and two" or "You need to add a transition between paragraphs one and two".
4. **Be specific!** Try to make your comments clear and as text-specific as possible so that the writer doesn't have to guess about what you are referring to. For example, the following comment alone wouldn't be helpful: *This sentence isn't clear*. As the reviewer, you should explain *why* the sentence isn't clear. Is there a new term that is used but hasn't been defined? Is the notation confusing?
5. **Give some positive encouragement!** Peer review has a reputation of being painful because everyone always thinks they will only receive critiques. Find some positive things that you enjoyed or thought were well executed/explained.
6. **Don't overwhelm your peer.** Too much commentary may hinder editing. Additionally, it's important to remember that the paper you are reviewing is someone else's paper; don't try to turn it into your own.

---

## Stat 311 Project: Guiding questions for peer review

**Instructions:** Read the draft assigned to you twice. First, read the paper without leaving comments to get an overview of the paper. Then read the draft a second time to provide constructive criticism. On a physical piece of paper to be turned in at the end of class: 1) answer the following questions, 2) list any lingering questions or confusions after having read the paper twice, and 3) list at least three things (macro or micro) that the writer did well.

### Content

- Did the writer adequately address Objectives 1-5? Try to find the areas in the paper where these Objectives are met.
- Did the writer address the Objectives clearly, effectively, and in enough detail? Where does the writer need to spend more time/space diving a bit deeper? What are some places that need to be clarified?
- Are there areas in the paper that could benefit from a specific example that helps illustrate a complex concept?
- Does the writer convince the reader that they truly understand all the material? Are there places in the paper where the writer seems to be “telling” but not “showing”?
- Are there sentences in the paper that do not add to the overall understanding of the topic? What could be deleted?

### Organization

- Did the writer use section headers or subheadings that effectively guide the reader? Explain and/or provide suggestions.
- Was the material ordered in a way that was logical, clear, and easy to follow? Explain and/or provide suggestions on how some of the material might be re-ordered, and why. Consider, in particular, how Objectives 1-5 are presented.

### Technical writing

- Did the writer define all of their notation/random variables/parameters? Were they defined at an appropriate time/order in the paper?
- Was all of the statistical notation consistent throughout the paper?

### Style, and citations

- Was the writer’s writing style clear? Were the paragraphs and sentences cohesive?
- Did the writer cite sources adequately and in a consistent style? Note any discrepancies.
- Are there places where the writer sounds repetitive or re-defines something?