



## Step-by-step instructions for students when reviewing a draft

As you carefully read the draft, focus on three areas: 1) main ideas/points, 2) writing style, and 3) errors. To assist the writer in revising this section and writing the rest of the thesis, there is a specific technique to use.

First, in the left-hand margin, use a technique called “glossing” to help the writer determine whether he or she is getting the point across.

Second, in the right-hand margin, make evaluative and/or critical comments.

Third, circle any typos or other types of errors in order to help the writer improve the quality of writing. More information on each of these types of evaluations is below.

### 1) **Glossing**

This is a technique that is designed to help the writer determine whether he or she is adequately getting his/her point across. For each paragraph, write the main idea of that paragraph in the *left-hand margin* in your own words.

### 2) **Evaluative/critical comments**

The *right-hand margin* should be for comments about writing style, sentence structure, or the like. For example, “This sentence is a bit confusing” or “This sentence really clarifies the point.”

### 3) **Edits**

Please *circle* typos, misspellings, grammar issues, or other editorial errors.

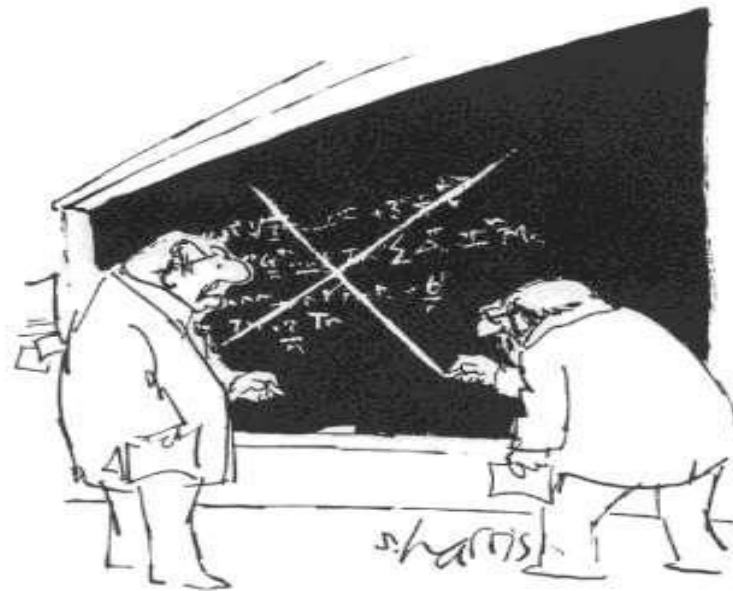
### 4) **Once you reach the last paragraph of the draft, **highlight the two sentences** in the paragraph that seem to you to be the *conclusion*. (Note that if there is more than one chapter in the draft you have, it might help the writer if you do this for each chapter.)**

### 5) **What are the two strongest features of this draft; what does the writer do particularly well?**

### 6) **Most Important Changes**

If the author only had 1 hour to make changes to this draft, what three changes would you suggest?

Once you have finishing marking the draft based on the directions on the previous page, then discuss/explain your comments with the writer of the draft.



"That's it? That's peer review?"

## Issues to Consider in Peer Review

### 1. Should the process be anonymous?

Some students may have difficulty offering criticism to their peers in a face-to-face encounter. There are several options for addressing this concern: collect the papers and assign numbers to them, so the review is anonymous (only the individual knows his or her number); or collect the papers electronically and display sample works in front of the class with the name removed.

### 2. Should I pair students for the review or allow them to self-select?

The problem identified above can be exacerbated, at times, when friends pair with friends to review papers. One way to alleviate this problem is to assign pairs. There may be advantages to pairing students by ability. When weaker students review stronger papers they learn, and can see what is possible. When stronger students review weaker papers, peers learn from peers. A double review process, in which each paper is reviewed twice, once by a stronger, and then by a weaker writer, can offer both advantages.

### 3. Should I provide class time for the peer review?

Faculty take different approaches here. Some allocate class time, as this allows students to verbally follow up on the comments they make. An alternative approach is to collect the papers in advance, and then distribute them to be reviewed as "homework," with a small amount of time in class for follow-up.



#### **4. Should the peer review be graded?**

Many faculty assign a grade to the peer reviewer's work, so that the person reviewing the paper will recognize the value of her role. Instructors have found that when the peer review has meaning for the reviewer's grade, the quality of the comments can be improved.

#### **5. What should the goal of the peer review be?**

The peer review should be structured to mirror the kinds of assistance your students might require. In the early stages of the writing process, for example, it may be helpful simply to have the students read their drafts aloud to solicit feedback from their peers. Research has shown the reading the draft can enable students to correct their written errors. In the later stages of writing, it may be more appropriate to impose higher level goals, for example, identifying pieces of evidence in support of a thesis.

#### **6. How can I better incorporate the peer review into my overall lesson plan?**

Bean (1999) recommends one strategy for incorporating the peer review into the overall learning process more fully. He suggests staggering the due dates of short (1-2 page) papers and assigning topics that correspond with the topics on the syllabus. In this format, the student papers can be presented on different days, and used as the basis for class discussion of the topic. Students come to class with photocopies or an overhead of their essay. The pressure to "go public" with the essay produces better work, and students can be offered the opportunity to revise the papers based on feedback they receive from peers.

#### **7. How can I best guide my students through the peer review process?**

Student peer reviewers should be focused at the level of ideas. They should be encouraged to provide the writer with feedback on content rather than form. What is the author's thesis? What evidence is offered in support of the thesis? While students may not give good advice on grammar, they can often recognize wording problems (e.g., "This doesn't flow"), so they might be advised simply to check spots where grammar poses reading difficulties.

#### **8. What if the advice my student got from the reviewer is wrong or inapplicable?**

This sometimes happens, especially if by the luck of the draw, a strong writer gets paired with a weaker writer. Nearly always, the student with this question will come to see you and you can quietly remind them that their writing instincts should likely prevail in their decision making about a revision. If it happens that a weaker writer gets good advice and questions its applicability, shift the discussion to "what would happen if you took this reviewer's advice," and ask the writer to compare the result with the original. Again, nearly always the right advice will prevail.