

## 10 Tips for Peer Response Groups Assembling Groups

(Adapted, in part, from Fulwiler, T.)

1. The group should probably be no larger than three or four students. Students should be instructed to bring to class enough copies of their draft for each member of their group. When possible, groups should be organized along common lines of interest.
2. To work well, groups need to meet on a regular basis—at least as often as each draft is due. If the same members remain in a group throughout the semester, they often become expert readers of one another's work.
3. If you plan for the groups to meet during class time, let each member read his or her paper out loud, once, with groups members following silently as the author reads.
4. Each member should respond to the author's paper honestly. Praise and criticism should be mixed, but all commentary should be honest. Groups should be instructed to make general, overall comments first, saving remarks on punctuation, etc. for later, if there is time.
5. Budget the group's time. Each member should receive at least 15-20 minutes for reading. One session can be devoted to reading proposals for projects, another for introductions, and still another for other parts of the paper.
6. The author should restrict his or her oral defense to the paper to a minimum and take good notes as group members make their comments. (As the group begins to trust one another, this part becomes easier.)
7. Instruct students to talk about the writing. The point of the group is to explore writing about the topic rather than talking about the topic in general.
8. Take the oral reading seriously, and the students will do the same. Instruct the students to try to make revisions based on the group discussion.
9. Papers should be submitted to the instructor at the next class meeting. You might also ask students to comment on their reactions to working on their writing in groups. All material should be kept in a portfolio.
10. If you prefer not devoting total class time to group work, let the group members work for half the period in groups and instruct them to finish their discussion on email. Each group should have its own distribution list, with each member receiving all the other members' commentary.

### Pre-Review Handout

To make the most of peer review, we would like you to help focus the reviewers' attention to your specific writing concerns. Please complete this worksheet and include it with your paper that you submit for peer review. Keep in mind that these are the kinds of issues you could address in future solicitations for feedback on your writing (both in this class and beyond).

1. How would you describe the assignment in your own words? What are you trying to achieve with this paper?
2. How does this assignment fit into the larger goals for the course?
3. Who is the audience for the paper? (For instance, what can you assume your audience already knows?)
4. Have you shared a draft of the paper with anyone already? If so, who was it, and what feedback/advice did you receive?
5. What changes, if any, have you made in light of the feedback you received?
6. What are your top three concerns about this draft? Are you concerned, for example, with the main idea or claim, supporting argument(s) or evidence, organization, use of sources, the grammar, sentence structure, style, introduction, conclusion, or something else? Be as specific as possible.
7. What do you usually struggle with as a writer?
8. What else would you like your reviewers to know about your draft or yourself as a writer (such as particular strengths or weaknesses)?

## Peer Review Guidelines

The goal of this assignment is to help you learn to give effective feedback to your classmates about their writing. Before you begin your review, your classmate will provide you with the writing context and her or his concerns about the draft (see questions above). Your peer's concerns and questions should always drive your response.

The peer review process should look something like this:

- Review the questions above and your peer's paper once just to get a sense of the paper, jotting notes to yourself as you go. You will not be returning a marked-up copy of the paper to your classmate, so any notes you make will be to remind yourself about something you wish to comment on later.
- Re-read the assignment, your peer's concerns (from questions above), and the paper again. This time, look to see if the overall structure and logic of the paper are sound, how the writer uses evidence, and any patterns or errors (again making notes to yourself).
- Write your comments in the form of a letter to the author, using the guidelines on the following pages to ensure that you are working productively.
- For each review that you do, plan to spend about an hour. This includes the time it takes you to read the draft, think about your comments, and write your letter, but does not include the time it takes you to upload your documents. If you are not spending at least an hour with the text, you may not be considering it fully enough.
- Be mindful of your tone as you respond to your peer's writing. There's certainly no need to go overboard with niceties, but consider integrating a couple of positive comments for things that seem to be working well, especially at the beginning of your comments. You might want to use language such as: "I like how you ..." or "I'm impressed by ..."  
Essentially, think about ways to achieve something like the balance between being honest and congenial that you'd aim for if you were talking face-to-face. A tone that works particularly well is one that is both friendly and supportive.

Suggestions for the peer review process:

- *Ask questions.* Your job as a reviewer is not to fix the paper, but rather to help your classmate understand how the writing affects readers. Given this approach, it can be very helpful to ask questions, just as you might do if you were talking face-to-face. It will be helpful for the writer to reflect on these questions when making writing choices.
- *Questions about claims.* You might ask, "What in the readings or evidence prompted you to develop this claim? Why are you interested in this aspect of the topic? How does the evidence support your claim? How many pieces of evidence do you have (and does the quantity of evidence say anything about the strength of that evidence)? Do you have additional evidence that isn't included in this draft?"
- *Questions about evidence.* If the writer needs more evidence, you might say that you would like to hear more about a particular point, that you didn't understand a certain point, and/or that you have additional unanswered questions.
- *Questions about organization.* If you think a certain paragraph doesn't belong, you can

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describe your response as a reader; for example, “When I got to this paragraph, I wondered what it was doing here – it seemed like you had been talking about A, but all of a sudden, here’s this paragraph about B! Can you help your reader understand how this paragraph should fit in?” The student may need better transitions, or may have left out something important that will clarify matters, or he or she may see that the paragraph doesn’t really belong. But let the writer make those decisions – if you say, “Take that one out!” you are making the writing decision for her/him.

- *Questions about sentence structure.* How might you help your classmate learn to revise a sentence without changing it? Make up a similar sentence and carry out your revisions on it, explaining what the problem is, what options there are for revising it, and why you selected the option you did. Offer several different options, not just one, so that the writer sees that he/she has many choices.
- *Questions about word choice.* Ask why the writer chose the word; tell them what the word means to you and why it seems odd to you in this context. You could say, for example, “In your opening paragraph, I wonder how you chose the word ‘bellicose.’ When I read this word, I think of someone who is aggressive and warlike; is that what you meant?”
- *Look for patterns.* When addressing sentence-level issues, look for patterns of error, rather than going through the draft and pointing out errors in the order in which they occur. The same sort of big-picture reflection will be helpful with non-sentence-level issues, too. If you notice wordiness, see how often it occurs; if you see one transition that troubles you, check out the others. You can then try to offer the writer new ideas about this general issue, instead of just commenting on one sentence here and another one there.
- *Beware of taking over.* Avoid the following, as easy and tempting as they may be:
  - Revising the writer’s thesis or claim
  - Presenting new evidence for the writer to include
  - Rewriting individual sentences
  - Telling the writer to use a different word (and suggesting what the new word should be)
  - Telling the writer to remove a paragraph or to move it to a specific place
- *Organize your comments.* Consider outlining or clearly grouping your comments, realizing that a certain approach may work well in one instance, but not necessarily another. Here are some strategies:
  - Organize your comments by first addressing the writer’s concerns (in an orderly way) and then moving on to additional concerns you noticed.
  - Emphasize the more significant writing issues (such as how effective the claim is, how powerful the evidence) at the beginning of your feedback, and ending with more minor issues (word choice, spelling errors, etc.).
  - Make your comments chronologically: Feel free to note specific paragraphs or sentences where problems occur; for example, you could say, “In the second paragraph you...”
- *Use your time effectively:* You should plan to spend about an hour reading, thinking about, and responding to the paper. To use this time most effectively, consider the following strategies:
  - Consider holding off making any comments until you’ve read through the whole paper at least once. This allows you to get a sense of the overall writing, to make

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- sure your comments focus on the real issues, and may save you having to go back to amend earlier comments. (Taking notes as you read is still a good idea!)
- Consider letting the writer's stated concerns/goals guide your approach to the organization of your commentary. This gives you a focus while reading, as well as a set of topics on which to center your comments. (Of course, if you identify issues that you perceive to be of more concern than those your classmate raises, you should certainly comment on those.)
  - *Consider your language choices.* Because your classmate isn't with you and you can't see her/his reactions, be sure to write in a respectful and fairly neutral style. It's important to avoid evaluative claims; instead of saying, "Your paper is really successful," it would be more appropriate to say, "After seeing your presentation of the evidence, I was convinced of your argument." Be especially careful about anything that might sound overly harsh, offensive, or patronizing.
  - *Make your organization explicit.* If you are responding in writing, consider simple visual strategies (bullet points, numbering, boldface, etc.) to keep your content clear and to emphasize your main points. If you are recording your comments, you may want to use language such as: "First I'll make some suggestions related to your organization. Second, I will discuss ways you might make your claims more effective. Finally, since you asked about commas, I will point out a few places where you make the same error and include a link to a handout that should help."
  - *Know the limitations of this type of work.* In the time you spend with this paper (roughly an hour), you may find that you could discuss a large number of different writing issues. Keep in mind, however, that your classmate may be overwhelmed (and dismayed) if presented with a list of fifteen things to look at or work on. Therefore, it is essential that you prioritize your comments. Use signals such as, "If you only had time to work on one thing, I think you could increase clarity the most by considering ..." or "The three areas that gave me the most trouble as a reader were ..."
  - *Refer the writer to other resources.* As a peer reviewer, no one expects you to be the expert on all issues related to writing. If you sense that there is a problem with the writing but are unsure, feel free to refer your classmate to a handout from class, a chapter from one of our texts, the Writing Studio Web site, or the course instructor. It is particularly helpful to point out several places in the paper where the error/problem occurs, and then let the writer try to resolve the issue using the resources you suggest.
  - *Emphasize the fact that you are just one reader.* Keep in mind for yourself, and emphasize for the writer, that you are just one a reader; consider prefacing your comments with phrases such as, "As one reader ..." or "From my perspective ... " You are not offering the definitive summary of what does and does not work in the paper.

**Instructions for Response-Centered Peer Review**  
(adapted by Dr. Daniel Goldberg from Bean, 2011)

1. Guiding Questions: Considering the discussion of writing in your discipline and the traits we identified through DCM, create a list of 4 to 5 guiding questions for peer feedback.
2. The first writer reads the draft out loud (if a long draft, please read no more than 2 pages).
3. Group members take several minutes to take notes on their responses. Your notes should be categorized according to page divided into the following 3 columns:
  - a. + (note aspects of the draft that work well)
  - b. – (note problem areas and points of disagreement)
  - c. ? (note questions that occur during listening, such as places that need clarification or more development)
4. Each group member explains to the writer what he/she found effective or ineffective, etc.  
Note: Group members do not give advice; they simply describe their responses to the draft as written.
5. The writer takes notes during each response, but does not try to defend the piece or explain “what I meant.”
6. After each group member has responded to a writer’s essay, the next group member reads his or her essay. The cycle continues.

## Tips for Structuring Peer Review Feedback Activities

The tips below assist a responder in structuring the activity to encourage higher-level thought and reflection.

Reviewers should:

- Read or listen to the entire draft before commenting
- Focus on the significant issues first then move on to less critical topics
- Raise important questions about the draft but let the author revise the work as appropriate
- Praise what works well and share the specific examples
- Be honest and fair
- Outline the general themes covered and the methods employed
- Avoid general statements. Share specific examples and analysis wherever possible
- Thank the writer for sharing his/her work

For future peer review sessions, consider how the following requirements can be built into the peer review activity:

- Consider having a requirement that peer reviewers must analyze at least three features that make the draft represent 'good writing.'
- Consider requiring reviewers to choose three areas to offer praise, two areas for improvement and one question for each draft.
- Try to describe what they see (or hear) in the paper—and identify what they see as the main point, and what they see as the organizational pattern.
- Encourage peer reviewers during their initial reading to underline sections of the draft that they feel are important and circle areas where they have questions.
- Have reviewer think about how the draft could be summarized in 5 sentences. Then think about how it can be summarized in 2 sentences. Finally, determine if one word can be identified to summarize the work.
- Remind reviewers to provide an explanation for their comments. For instance instead of saying, "It was good," require learners to explain why it was good.
- Require learners to thank their peer reviewers.

## Structuring Peer Review Feedback Activities

As a course developer you may provide opportunities for peer review within your online course. The tips below will assist you in structuring the activity to encourage higher-level thought and reflection. If you've ever wondered how you can encourage learners to provide more depth in their feedback other than, "great job", keep reading! You may include tips/details such as these in your written directions, scoring tools, and/or in a Peer Review Standards document that you develop for the online course.

Writers should:

- Articulate the purpose of the piece to the reviewer.
- Let the peer reviewer know if you want your piece BLESSED, ADDRESSED, or PRESSED?
  - **Bless:** If you want your piece blessed, you're not ready to hear criticism yet (however constructive it might be). You want only to hear about what's working so far.
  - **Address:** If you have chosen the address option, what one problem or concern do you want your readers/audience to address? Be as specific as possible.
  - **Press:** You're ready to hear constructive criticism and give the readers/audience the freedom to respond in any fashion. This, of course, can include "Bless" and "Address."
- Provide two to three guiding questions you would like the reviewer to consider while reading and responding.
- Listen carefully as the reviewer is responding, and take good notes.
- Thank the reviewer for their feedback and ideas.

Peer reviewers should:

- Read or listen to the text before commenting.
- Focus on the significant, global issues first and then move on to the less critical topics afterwards.
- Raise important questions about the draft but let the author revise the work as appropriate.
- Praise what works well, pointing out specific examples.
- Be honest and fair.
- Avoid general statements. Share specific examples and analysis wherever possible.
- Use sentence starters like
  - I like how you...
  - I am interested in how you...
  - I'm wondering if...
  - I'd like to know more about...
- Thank the writer for sharing his/her work.

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- Consider having a requirement that peer reviewers must analyze at least three features that make the draft represent 'good writing'
- Consider requiring reviewers to choose three areas to offer praise, two areas for improvement and one question for each draft
- Try to describe what they see (or hear) in the paper—and identify what they see as the main point, and what they see as the organizational pattern
- Encourage peer reviewers during their initial reading to underline sections of the draft that they feel are important and circle areas where they have questions
- Have reviewer think about how the draft could be summarized in 5 sentences. Then think about how it can be summarized in 2 sentences. Finally, determine if one word can be identified to summarize the work.
- Remind reviewers to provide an explanation for their comments. For instance instead of saying, "It was good" require learners to explain why it was good.
- Require learners to thank their peer reviewers.

Inadequate Peer Feedback Example: "You've done a terrific job with this assignment."

Appropriate Peer Feedback:

"You've met the objectives of this assignment by identifying the problem (insufficient time for staff development), focusing on a solution (online learning environments), and offering advice on the processes necessary to remedy the problem (staff training on how to use the ELC, providing motivation/incentive, making tasks relevant to teachers' needs, etc). After reflecting upon your thesis I'd be interested to know how you might 'sell' the concept of online learning environments to the teachers at your school Are there any resources that you may need to gather prior to handling such an interaction?"

### Structuring Peer Review Feedback

It might be helpful to student to have a scoring tool or guiding questions to help them compose useful and appropriate peer review feedback. Following are examples you could adapt for particular assignments:

Scoring Tool:

Not evident	In progress	Emerging	Criteria	Explanation for Choice
			Content:	
			Mode/presentation:	
			Audience awareness:	
			Voice:	
			Overall effectiveness	

**Sample Peer Review Questions**  
(from Ann Bomberger)

Peer reviews, a staple of many writing classes, encourage students to look at their writing as a work in progress. During a peer review session, each student is required to critique one or more of his/her fellow student's papers. Sometimes these sessions take place during class time and at other times they are homework assignments. Whether conducted in class or out of class, peer reviews emphasize the importance of beginning an assignment early enough to allow for substantive revision. When writing instructors require peer reviews, they often provide a series of questions in order to prompt students to approach their critique thoroughly. The impulse of many students is simply to tell their classmate that the paper is of "A" quality, whether it is or not. To discourage this kind of overly inflated praise, professors sometimes grade peer reviews (usually on a broad scale, like "minus," "check," and "plus"). In-depth peer commentary can also be encouraged by maintaining the same peer review groups over the course of the semester. Over time, students develop a greater sense of trust with one another and feel more willing to talk honestly about their writing. Unfortunately, some students unintentionally will give bad advice to their fellow students. Even these scenarios can have pedagogical value, however, in that they provide the opportunity to emphasize to student writers that they should weigh carefully advice they get from any outside editor (including professors!) before they make any changes. A writer must have a clear sense of where he or she wants the paper to go. Too much outside influence will cause the student to feel alienated and disinterested in his/her paper. To highlight the importance of self-guided revision, I often recommend that students use the peer review questions to help them analyze their own writing's strengths and weaknesses.

**Four sets of peer review questions:**

*Readers are welcome to copy any of these peer review questions for their own use.*

## Worksheet #1 (Created by Judith Rose)

Record the names of your workshop group above. Give the writer as much *honest* feedback as you can; remember that your response may make the difference between a weak paper and a strong one.

*First of all-ask the writer what strengths and weaknesses s/he sees in the essay. Upon what areas would the writer like to focus? List them here:*

*Make sure to pay particular attention to these aspects of the essay as you proceed.*

*\*\*\*Be sure to read through the entire essay-and the draft workshop sheet-before you begin the critique.*

1. Does the opening paragraph 'grab' you? Does it begin energetically, with plenty of active verbs? How else could it be improved?
2. a) State the thesis of this paper. Does it interest you? Why or why not?  
b) Does the thesis effectively link the writer's personal experience with the text s/he has chosen? How could the writer improve thesis focus?
3. a) Does the writer focus upon a pivotal incident (or incidents), and offer a thoughtful parallel with one of the texts we have studied? How convincing does s/he make the case for the linkage between the two? Suggest some ways in which the writer could strengthen the parallels.  
b) How well is the comparison supported by quotations from the text[s]? Do you find these quotes well-chosen and relevant? Are they cited correctly?
4. Does the writer vividly and clearly describe the situation in his/her own life, making it come alive for the reader? Make some suggestions aimed toward a more lively personal account.
5. How could this essay be improved on the sentence level? Mark your copies of the draft, making specific suggestions to improve sentence structure and overall clarity.
6. Does the conclusion provide closure and offer an interesting final insight that helps you to understand the significance of the experience? How could the writer make it more effective?
7. Finally, shut your eyes and think about the paper. What did you get out of it?

**Worksheet #2 (Created by Laura Quinn)**

*(This assignment specifically required students to identify a writing strategy in the assigned text and to analyze the import of that strategy)(Notice that she emphasizes global revisions before she encourages students to critique the paper on stylistic and grammatical grounds)*

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Paper Author's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Part I: Name the writing strategy that the author is presenting. What are the effects that the author claims this writing strategy to have? Briefly describe or outline the main points that the author makes in support of her or his claims about this writing strategy. In other words, provide a short paragraph summary in your own words of the author's argument.

Part II: Identify and describe in detail what you find to be the main content problems with the presentation of the argument. What does this writer need to do to revise this paper successfully in relation to the problems that you find?

Part III: Identify, describe, and provide short examples of the main writing problems that you find in the draft. These include grammar, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, etc. What are the most important writing problems that the author needs to work on between now and next Monday?

**Workshop Worksheet #3 (Created by Ben Slote)**

NAME OF PEER EDITOR: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF WRITER: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: read both of your classmates' essays at least twice carefully, the first time straight through (without making any notes anywhere) to get a sense of the shape and effectiveness of the essay as a whole. While you are reading each essay a second time, note in the margin of the draft moments in the writing that seem particularly strong or in need of improvement in some way, and explain your reactions. Don't spend most of your time correcting spelling or grammar problems. Then respond to all the questions on this sheet. Your responses need to be as precise and constructive as possible. For your comments to be helpful to the writer, they will need to be more specific than, "this seems little vague" or "this doesn't flow too well" or "this essay is fine; it doesn't need much." Explain where exactly the problems lie and what exactly might work in a revision. Even your response to questions 2, 3 and 4, which ask for recommendations for a global revision, should be as precise as possible. These worksheets are due this Wednesday in class; you will attach them to your peers' drafts and hand them to the writers. The drafts and worksheets will later be handed in to me with the final drafts on Wednesday, the 29th.

1. What is the essay's argument or central contention?
2. What exactly are the strengths and weaknesses of the writer's thinking about *There Are No Children*? What other ideas might the writer consider adding? What assertions in the draft might be worth taking out in a revision? Explain.
3. Where is the writing in the draft persuasive? Where isn't it? How might the writer make the essay more persuasive? (Are there passages from the book the writer doesn't consider but should?)
4. How is the essay organized? What is wise about that organization? What changes in the organization might improve the essay-- and why? Are there any paragraphs that don't seem to be organized around one assertion? What help can you offer?
5. Does the essay always seem pitched to the right audience (fellow students who have also read the book)? Explain precisely.
6. Write out one sentence from the essay that you particularly admire and explain what's effective about the sentence.
7. Write out another sentence that needs revision, explain the problem and try revising it.

**Workshop Worksheet #4 (Created by Ann Bomberger)**

Your Name:

Student Author's Name:

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Find two people to exchange papers with.
2. Fill out a form for each paper you read.
3. Read the entire peer review sheet before doing anything else.
4. Read the entire student essay before you make any comments at all.
5. When responding, try to be sensitive to other people's feelings without being wishy-washy. You can help them improve their grade if you give them substantial feedback. Conversely, being cruel helps no one.
6. Write your comments on the draft itself and on the peer review sheet. DO NOT change the other student's writing in any way. Instead, make comments to help the student change the paper on his/her own.
7. Do not grade the paper you are reading.

QUESTIONS:

1. Does the paper fulfill the assignment?
2. Is there a thesis (a sentence stating the argument clearly and concisely)? If so, what is it? How might the thesis be improved?
3. How insightful is the paper? Give an example of a particularly analytical portion of the paper. Give an example of a place where the student's observation is rather obvious.
4. Are the ideas supported with enough examples (both paraphrases and quotations)? Make a note of any paragraphs that seem to be lacking in textual support.
5. Examine the structure of the essay. Does it hang together well? Can readers follow easily? Are there any jarring transitions? If so, where? Are there any particularly smooth transitions?
6. Overall, are words, phrases, and sentences clear? Give an example of a particularly clear sentence. Give an example of a sentence that could be clearer.
7. How grammatically correct is the paper? List any recurring problems. Has the paper been proofread? Has it been run through spellcheck?
8. Is the textual proof cited properly?
9. Overall, what are some of the strengths of the paper?
10. What areas do you think the person should work on when revising?

## Revising and Proofreading: A Comprehensive Guide

(adapted from J. Madraso. "Proofreading: the Skill We've Neglected to Teach")

Effective revising is a crucial part of successful writing. Careful revision requires writers to read for detail and to be open to re-thinking and re-working crucial ideas. The following guide can help refine your revising techniques.

**Task Management:** Writers need to make sure they understand what the assignment requires and what readers (whether professors or real-world colleagues) expect from the document; a portion of the revision process should be devoted to making sure that the paper fulfills these requirements and expectations. To improve your task management, ask yourself these questions:

- **What tasks does the assignment require?** Keep in mind that many assignments require more than one task, and that some tasks are more valued than others (for instance, "analyze" is usually considered more important than "summarize").
- **When is your paper due?** Try to finish early. At the very least, try to give yourself a break between writing and revising.
- **Who is your audience?** Peers, professor, professionals in the field, etc.? Different audiences read for different reasons and with different expectations. Make sure that you know what your audience is reading for and what they will expect from your writing.
- **What is the page limit?** What are the penalties for running short or running long? Find out what the acceptable parameters are, and try to stick to them.
- **What citation style should you use?** If you are using MLA, APA, or Chicago Style, check out the Writing Center's Citation Guides for instructions and examples.
- **What resources are available for you to use?** In addition to the Writing Center's in-person and online resources, you may also be able to consult with your professor, TA, or other colleagues in your field. If you're doing research, you can consult with a reference librarian.

**Argument Strategy:** Writers need to make sure that their arguments and/or recommendations are organized, developed, and well-supported. Here are some strategies to improve organization, clarity, focus, and other problems with development.

- **Read only your introduction and conclusion.** Do they agree with each other and the other sections of your paper? Do they actually say what you think they say? Keep in mind that most writers "discover" what they really want to say as they are writing. Once you've figured it out, make sure that you explain and support your main point consistently throughout the paper.
- **Isolate your thesis.** Read this thesis along with each topic sentence only. Do the topic sentences support the thesis?
- **Review all source material.** Focus on each quote, paraphrase, summary, or synthesis. Did you provide enough evidence for your ideas? Does each source clearly relate to your argument? Did you introduce and interpret all source material? Is each source cited appropriately?

- **Make a reverse outline after you've written a complete draft.** A reverse outline breaks your paper into its components: thesis, main ideas, evidence, etc., arranged in the order in which you present them in the paper. This technique highlights any potential structural problems. You might notice that you don't seem to have enough evidence for one of your main ideas, or that one of your thoughts seems out of place.
- **Play devil's advocate.** Many writers present only the evidence that supports their opinion on a topic, without acknowledging the other possible position(s). But papers that consider, and then dismantle, counterarguments show a willingness to be open-minded and critical. Read over your paper for places where you could acknowledge an opposing position, and then explain the flaws in that position (and, thus, further support your argument).

**Sentence-Level Clarity:** Writers need to make sure that their writing is clear and easily readable. There are a number of technical tips and strategies to help writers proofread effectively. These methods help you focus on sentence-level concerns.

- **Read your paper aloud:** This method is great for finding omitted words or awkward sentences, but should be used with great caution for punctuation errors.
- **Set your paper aside:** Taking a day away from the paper can give you a new outlook on grammar and clarity, as well as overall organization.
- **Use a ruler:** This method forces you to concentrate on one line at a time. This helps locate specific error patterns and prevents you from reading ahead and anticipating what you "meant to say," but did not actually say.
- **Read the paper backwards:** This method is great for finding punctuation and other grammar errors. Like using a ruler, it also prevents you from reading ahead and anticipating what you "meant to say," but did not actually say.
- **Read for error patterns:** First, make an "error log" (see reverse). Once you are aware of what your typical errors are, you should read for them specifically and one at a time. For example, if you are using this method to look for subject-verb agreement, you should not also look for passive voice.
- **Read for spelling errors:** Don't rely on spell / grammar checkers alone. There are some errors they cannot catch. For instance, names and disciplinary terminology are not in the checkers' dictionaries - you'll have to check them yourself. Similarly, the checker cannot tell you the difference between misused but correctly-spelled words (such as to/too/two or whether/weather) or typos that create another (such as possess/posses).

## Checking for Six Common Sentence Errors (adapted from Temple University resource)

The list of questions below is not all-inclusive, but it suggests some of the common problems that may arise in sentences. You should add to this list any additional problems that you typically encounter when you write.

### Is the sentence complete?

- Is there a subject?
- Is there a verb?
- What if there's more than one verb?

### Are any words missing, or are any words inadvertently repeated?

- Read the sentence out loud to help spot missing or extraneous words.

### Is the sentence punctuated correctly? Are verbs used correctly?

- Does each verb agree with its subject?
- Does the verb tense correctly express when the action takes place (past, present, future, etc.)?

### Are pronouns used correctly?

- What noun phrase does the pronoun represent? How close together are they? Are there any other noun phrases in between the two?
- Do the pronoun and the noun it refers to agree? (Are they both plural or both singular?)

### Is everything spelled correctly?

- Run a spell check.
- Remember to check for commonly confused words that computer spell-checkers miss (it/it's, their/there, etc.). Also, keep in mind that computers often don't "know" technical terms and recently invented words, so you'll have to check those yourself.