

Peer Review

With strategic prompts and basic training, students can serve as peer reviewers for one another. Peer review takes the onus off the instructor to provide **formative feedback** at all stages of the writing process, and benefits both sides of the review dyad: the writer receives targeted, actionable feedback, and the reader gains from having reflected on their peers' writing and the instructor's assignment. Peer review can be performed for **high-stakes and low-stakes assignments**, and thus increases the amount of writing you can assign without increasing your grading load. It also encourages a **growth mindset** and provides students with rich opportunities for **metacognition**.

Some ways to implement peer review:

To avoid erratic or counterproductive feedback, and until students are more experienced peer reviewers, it helps to structure the process around specific, strategic prompts. You might:

- Ask students to seek specific things in their peer's writing (thesis, claims, and evidence) and code them in the margins.
- Ask students to reflect on a peer's writing in their own words. ("In one or two sentences, what is the writer's claim? Turn over the page and outline your peer's paper. List the pieces of evidence your peer uses, identify which is most and least compelling, and explain why.")
- Ask students to use the **rubric** designed for the assignment and identify the highest impact areas for improvement.
- Ask students to highlight a few sentences that were hard to understand.
- Ask students to reflect on their own writing and identify something they learned from their peer that they'll apply in their own revision.

In addition to strategic prompts, there are many ways to train students in effective peer review. You might:

- Hold a mock peer review session using a sample essay.
- Use your peer review prompts when going over other class reading.
- Align your grading rubric in relation to your peer review prompts.

There are many ways to operationalize peer review. You might prompt students to:

- Exchange drafts on paper or electronically, read and conduct peer review at home, and exchange completed feedback either in writing, or coupled with peer discussion.
- Hold workshops during class time, with students reading in class or in preparation, and conferencing face-to-face in response to your prompts.
- Work in small groups rather than pairs to increase the number of responses a writer receives, and to give students opportunities to read more of their peers' writing.
- Identify takeaways for a brief whole-class discussion.

References

Bean, John. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

"Planning and Guiding In-Class Peer Review." Washington University Teaching Center. Digital.

See also

Formative and Summative Feedback

Teaching with Small Groups

Using Rubrics