Two Heads are Better than One: Using Peer Editing

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Outline

- Peer editing?
- Objectives of peer editing
- Mechanics of peer editing
- Teaching students to peer edit
- Peer editor’s comments
- Using the feedback
- Informal assessment of peer editing
Peer Editing?

- Peer-to-peer activity

- Increases student awareness that
  - Good writing is a process involving many steps
    - Conceptualizing, outlining, drafting, editing, and revising
  - Writers improve with input and practice

- Peer-editing can be used at any stage in the writing process:
  - Pre-writing stage or brainstorming
  - Rough-draft stage
  - First reading
  - After first revision

- Peer-editing is NOT peers grading peers
Objectives of Peer Editing

- Develop editing and critical-reading skills
- Teach students to learn from others’ perspectives
  - Provide feedback to students from their peers
- Teach the importance of drafting and revising in the writing process
- Teach students to accept constructive criticism in their writing
- Provides students with a “genuine audience”¹
- Teach students to evaluate their own work (rather than relying on the instructor)

Ref: Linda Nilson, "Improving Student Peer Feedback"
Mechanics of Peer Editing

- Philosophy of peer editing
  - Response centered
    - Respondents describe their reaction to the piece as a reader
  - Advice centered
    - Peers give advice on improving the draft
- Type of peer editing
  - Group or pairs
- Class time
  - In-class or out-of-class exercise
Mechanics of Peer Editing (continued)

- Where to use peer editing in the writing process
  - Multiple places or once
- Grading of peer editing
  - Hand in peer’s comments with peer-edited version plus revision based on peer’s comments
  - Are the peer editors graded on their comments?
- Length of time between peer editing and revision deadline
Teaching Students to Peer Edit

- Students must be told the goal of the peer-edit exercise
  - Focusing in on a topic
  - Determine organization, flow, and clarity
- Give students a feedback handout to use for commenting
- Run a practice session to teach the students how to comment on a paper and how to discuss this feedback with the student author
- Set up ground rules for peer editing
  - Understand the assignment and the audience before reading the draft
  - Be polite and constructive (but honest) in your response
Peer Editor’s Comments

- Point to specifics in the draft when commenting
- Praise what works well in the draft
- Comment on large issues first
  - Underline the thesis of this essay.
  - Identify and list the main points of the paper.
  - What is the strongest evidence for the writer's position?
- Concentrate on the most important ways the draft could be improved
- Identify what is missing, what needs to be explained more clearly, and what might be cut
- Precision is important when commenting (vague comments are not useful)
Helping Student Authors Use the Feedback

- Student authors briefly summarize in writing the feedback and comment on their revision plans
- Student authors submit, with their revision, a cover memo bulleting their response to the feedback
- Student authors fill out a feedback form on their own draft, and compare with peer-editors’ feedback
- Student authors use feedback forms as a checklist for the revision
Assessing Effectiveness of Peer Editing

- Require student authors to:
  - Hand in feedback sheets with their revisions
  - Submit in writing their response to the feedback
- Use an assessment form for the peer-writing activity
  - What was most helpful about the feedback?
  - What suggestions do you have to make the feedback more useful?
  - Should we continue the use of peer editing? Why or Why not?
References


- Manoa Writing Program, University of Hawaii, “*Peer Review*”, URL: [http://mwp01.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/peer_review.htm](http://mwp01.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/peer_review.htm). (Accessed: 1/12/06)