

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

- L.B. Nilson, “Improving Student Peer Feedback”, *College Teaching*, **51**, 34 (2003).
- Manoa Writing Program, University of Hawaii, “*Peer Review*”, URL:
http://mwp01.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/peer_review.htm.
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