

## Peer Editing/Revising

As a peer editor, your job is to be as specific as possible in helping your classmates write a clear and strong paper. Below are ten areas that you can consider to help provide constructive feedback to other students. Ideally, start by pointing out the paper's strengths, and then move on to identify points that are less clear, places that require elaboration, missing evidence, confusing and/or grammatically incorrect sentences, missing parts of the argument, etc. Make sure that you offer suggestions rather than just identifying problems.

### 1. The “Why” Question/Puzzle

- Is the “why” question/puzzle clearly stated?
- Is it clear that this is a “puzzle” - something that calls out for explanation? Or, does the answer seem too obvious?
- Does the introductory paragraph clearly state the subject/scope of the paper, identify the research question, and provide an answer (a thesis statement)?

### 2. Thesis

- Is the thesis statement direct and easily identified?
- Does the thesis clearly and directly answer the “why” question?
- Does the thesis specify reasoning for the stance that the writer takes?
- Remember, a thesis statement is *an assertion, backed by evidence, that is falsifiable*. A thesis is NOT a statement of opinion or a statement of fact. It is a claim that you intend to prove.

### 3. Preview

- Did the writer tell you how s/he will organize the paper/advance the argument?
- Does the writer follow the order outlined in the preview?

### 4. Background

- Does the background adequately contextualize the question?
- Is there unnecessary detail in the background? That is, is every part in the background or context important given what follows? If not, extra material should be deleted.
- Is the background presented in a way that it seems clearly motivated by the “why” question and thesis?

### 5. Body Paragraphs

- Does the writer clearly lay out his/her explanation and present evidence to support it?
- Does each paragraph have one clear topic sentence?
- Are the paragraphs in an order that makes sense and moves the argument forward?
- Does the writer effectively use evidence to support his or her argument?
  - Do they introduce the evidence?
  - Do they explain how the evidence supports their point?
  - Do they establish the credibility of the evidence?
- Does each paragraph relate back to the main thesis?

### 6. Counter-arguments

- Does the paper identify a credible counter-argument to their thesis?

- Does the counterargument identify how reasonable people might disagree?
- Does the paper adequately argue that the thesis is preferable to the counter argument?
  - Hint: easy ways to construct counterarguments are to challenge the opposing point of views on the basis of
    - 1) assumptions (e.g., “Men are not islands unto themselves, and thus everything that follows (including Hobbes’ claim that the state of nature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short) is false.”)
    - 2) priorities (e.g., “Hobbes is wrong that life is more important than anything else; freedom matter more than security”)
    - 3) implications (e.g., “Although Hobbes correctly identifies things that drive us into a commonwealth, his commonwealth could easily turn into a state of nature once again.”)
    - 4) Methodology (e.g., “The overemphasis on interviews to the exclusion of large-N samples makes this an interesting but too narrow argument.”)
- Is this argument (against the counter-argument) credible/persuasive?

## 7. Conclusion

- Did the author come full circle and actually demonstrate/prove his or her argument?
- Does the author give the reader a sense that this was an important question – either in the terms of the conversation taking place in the literature or in relation to events unfolding?
- Does the conclusion provide suggestions for future research or action? Does it identify questions that were beyond the scope of the paper, but which are also important?

## 8. Citations

- Did the paper incorporate required sources?
- Has the author cited all of his/her sources, both quotes and paraphrases?
- Are there areas that are discussing an author or idea in detail, but which lack citations entirely?
- Did the writer use the correct method of citation (Chicago, MLA, APA), and use the same method throughout the paper?

## 9. Grammar

- Did the writer use predominantly active voice (vs. passive voice)?
  - Hint: Active Voice = Pablo moved the chair.  
Passive Voice = The chair was moved by Pablo.  
In active sentences, the agent (or doer) is always clear: in passive sentences, there is often ambiguity: Reagan, in reference to Iran-Contra, says “Mistakes were made,” instead of “I made mistakes.”
- Did the writer switch the past and present tense?
- Does the writer clearly identify the referent for pronouns?
- Are there spelling mistakes/typos?
- Are there any run-on sentences or sentence fragments?
- Did the grammar/spelling problems impede your understanding?

## 10. Details

- Does the first page of the paper have, in the header, the author’s name, TA/Professor’s Name, Course Number and Quiz Section?
- Does the paper have page numbers?
- Does the paper follow the guidelines regarding margins, font size, and spacing?
- Any thing else that would help the writer – using subheadings, etc?