

# Peer Assignment Review

**Educator:** Jonny Ursin – Instructor, Mathematics

**Context:** Out of class; Business Mathematics

**Keywords:** peer teaching

**Student Activity Time:** 20 minutes

*Students reflected on their own excel programming practices after viewing their peers' work.*

## Introducing the Reflection Activity

In a business mathematics course, an educator had students complete an assignment in Microsoft Excel and swap their spreadsheets with their classmates to review and attempt to analyze the content. The students then reflected on their own organizing schema for assignments. The purpose of this activity was to expose students to the work of peers in order to improve their own processes and presentation of their work.

In the business mathematics course, developing excel spreadsheets to calculate budgets, property value, and probabilities. An educator assigned students to design and program a spreadsheet task in class and assigned students to review another students' spreadsheet. The educator instructed students to pay specific attention to details such as labeling cells, use and sequence of specific formulas, and track the financial and work flow of the entire spreadsheet. At the end, the educator facilitated a short group discussion about what was observed from other students' work.

After completing the activity, students were prepared to apply many of the skills that were introduced in the class as well as some practical tips gleaned from their peers. The activity also helped students to improve their performance on class assignments and efficiency in using some of the features of Microsoft Excel.

## Recreating the Reflection Activity

	Description
1	Assign an in-class spreadsheet development activity.
2	Have students switch seats with each other and review the spreadsheet of a peer.
3	Facilitate a group conversation about any observations or new skills that students identified from their peer's work.
4	Prompt students to reflect on their own work and identify strategies that they can adopt.

### **In the words of the Educator: Tips and Inspiration**

*Give students a list of things to look for.* When the students switch seats, I asked them to identify the data that is output, where the output was in the spreadsheet, and how the other student approached the task. Some students are very efficient and organized in creating their spreadsheet. They had good habits like labeling their cells, while others just had a long list of numbers with formulas appearing here and there. I wanted students to see if they could follow the flow of work and if there was a mistake in the spreadsheet. It helps those who are not as organized because they could see how much easier it was when you have a clear structure for your spreadsheet.

*Use it to remind students of concepts taught in class.* Some students were surprised to see some of the used by their classmates. For example, having multiple commands in one cell was something “new” to some students, even though I had demonstrated it in class before. In their heads, each cell needed to have its own command, but seeing another student do it helps it click in their heads and that there is an advantage in doing it that way.

*What was the inspiration for the reflection activity?* I decided to do this after seeing the difference in students’ work. When I’m grading their work it’s apparent that some students have very organized worksheets and others are incredibly messy. Maybe, in some ways it was a selfish motivation, but it was mutually beneficial for the students and me. It gets out of their heads the idea that “Oh, the instructor does it all at once because he’s magic,” but then seeing a peer use the same trick makes it a little more accessible.