

Overall “Good Practices” for Peer Response

Your writing instructor is not the only person who can give you advice on your writing, help you grow as a writer, and stretch your ideas and understanding on a topic. Your classmates are also a valuable source of writing advice. Peer response is valuable because it enables you to expand your writing audience and receive a broader range of ideas and perspectives on your writing. However, for peer response to be a positive and helpful process for everyone, here are some useful guidelines:

- ❖ As you read your essay to your peers, **do not stop to explain or apologize**. If you need to explain, then the argument cannot stand alone on the page. Also, no one needs to apologize as we are all working on strengthening our writing skills.
- ❖ When you get advice from your peers, listen quietly and take notes. **Do not argue with your peer response members**. You are the author, so ultimately, if you do not agree with someone’s point, you do not need to incorporate that change.
- ❖ When giving advice, remember that it is difficult hearing criticism from others so **be tactful and never insulting**. Instead of saying, for instance, “That part was kind of lame because I was totally confused,” try a more tactful approach: “I was a little lost in the third paragraph; perhaps you could expand on your example to make it clearer.”
- ❖ When giving advice, also **be honest**. It actually is not helpful to simply tell someone, “Yeah, it was good; I liked it.” This gives the student no avenues for revision. If you are confused someplace or if an example seems off topic, or if the thesis is weak, be honest and tell them your opinion. Not doing so and letting a student think everything is “fine as is” can be more hurtful than the truth.
- ❖ **Balance your criticism with praise**. Do not forget to tell the author what you liked about the essay as well. Sometimes we get too focused on “fixing” things and forget to tell people what we liked or what they did well. Be sure to do both as you give feedback and you’ll find people are more receptive when you tell them positive comments along with suggestions for improvement.

