

The power of peer review

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The potential of peer review

- It gives an introduction to academic and other professional writing practices
- It demonstrates the value of editing and revision
- It gives students a “friendly” second opinion
- It emphasizes the concept of audience and purpose
- It shows how others “struggle” with the writing process (and creates community)
- It develops concepts and language to talk about writing
- It helps students to think critically about the writing process (and their own writing)
- It saves the teacher time and effort because the students do the work for her/him

The pitfalls of peer review

“The peer review process was confusing at first and sometimes I didn’t get any good feedback. But it usually helped me revise my paper and overall it was a valuable experience” (student in 300-level class)

Challenge One

- Avoid confusion
 - Provide a structure for the writing *and* review process
 - Be clear of the purpose of the writing, the nature of the audience, the style of writing, and the mode of assessment
 - Provide detailed instructions for reviewers

Structure of writing/review process

- The writing/review process [handout]
- The professional academic model
 - The Academic journal
 - Focus (Editorial statement)
 - Content (Table of contents and sample articles)
 - Guidelines (Information for authors)
 - Professional peer review
 - Purpose and nature (Guidelines for Reviewers)
- Our revised model: *The Geography Student*

The Geography Student

- Editorial Statement:

The Geography Student is the flagship publication of the National Association of Geography Students, and it has been published quarterly since its inception in 1995. It publishes cutting-edge peer-reviewed articles by and of interest to students in college-level geography classes, although it also seeks to broaden the appeal of the discipline to students in other fields and to broader audiences.

The Geography Student

- Content
 - Table of contents
 - Title of assigned paper
 - Title(s) of previous student paper(s)
 - Sample articles
 - Student papers (share redacted copies of best papers in class)
 - Note:
 - Academic/professional style of writing
 - Audience of peers

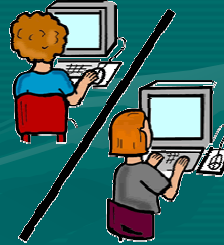
The Geography Student : Information for Authors

Manuscripts should be submitted in the following format:

1. **Text:** all text must be in a 12-point font and one-inch margins. All text must be double-spaced and paginated.
2. **Title page:** please select an appropriate title for your paper and provide your name and email address.
3. **First page:** please repeat the title on the first page but do not include any identifying information on this or any other subsequent page.
4. **Notes:** please make limited use of endnotes to amplify points made in the text.
5. **References:** references should be cited parenthetically in the text and include author's last name, date of publication, and page number, in that order. For example: (Smith, 2003: 45). List references at the end of the paper in alphabetical and chronological order, including author's full name if possible. For further information on references please consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* and use the *Annals* Style Sheet (<http://www.aag.org/Publication/Annals/annalsweb3.html>).
6. **Illustrations:** Maps, graphs and photos may be included when they are used to convey ideas efficiently and tastefully. They must be legible and referenced in the text.

Challenge two: getting “good” feedback

- “Positive” feedback
 - “Elbow response” exercise
- “Critical” feedback
 - Grade and extra credit
 - *The Geography Student* feedback exercise



“Elbow” response

After reading or listening to a paper read by your partner, quickly answer all of the following questions.

1. What seems to be the main idea of the paper? (How would you summarize it in one or two simple sentences?).
2. What title would you give to this paper?
3. What words or phrases did you especially notice (i.e. that stand out to you)?
4. What one thing did you like best? Why?
5. What one idea or theme would you like the author to have expanded upon or added?
7. What I like best about this paper is that it is _____.
8. One thing I might do differently is _____.

The Geography Student feedback exercise

- Anonymous double-blind peer review
 - Letter of invitation to review
 - Guidelines for reviewers
 - Sample from professional journals
 - Feedback form
 - Sample from professional journals

The Geography Student



October 13, 2005

Jennifer Lee
Department of Geography
University of Hawai'i

MS #: _____

Dear Ms. Lee,

The attached paper has been submitted to *The Geography Student*. We would very much like you to complete a review of this manuscript within one week. I have attached some guidelines for review and a review form. Please return the MS and the completed review form to me by Monday, September 19. You may also want to mark up the MS itself with corrections for the author.

Your assistance in refereeing articles for publication is deeply appreciated, as a journal cannot maintain standards without expertise from professionals such as yourself. I am confident also that the author will personally benefit from your efforts. Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Jon D. Goss
Editor

Guidelines for reviewers

- The purpose of the review process is to assist the editor in his decision *and* to provide *constructive* criticism for the author of the paper. Please remember that you are helping the author to improve *his/her* paper, not to have them write the paper you would write!
 - 1. Read the paper through without making any written comments
 - What is the paper about?
 - 2. Re-read the first paragraph
 - Is there a clear statement of the purpose, thesis and outline of the paper?
 - 3. Re-read each paragraph
 - Is the topic clear? How does the argument flow to the next paragraph?
 - 4. Consider the evaluation form
 - Answer each question. Accentuate the positive. Identify areas for improvement
 - 5. Make suggestions for improvements
 - Mark the manuscript with your specific comments identifying places where you think a specific improvement could be made
 - 6. Make an overall judgment to assist the editor

Evaluation Form

Please complete this review form, or provide a review considering these points on a separate sheet of paper. Please also provide a more detailed analysis for the author, either in the margins of the manuscript (please return the MS with the completed review) or on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Is the subject appropriate? Yes ____ No ____ Other ____

Comment:

2. Is the paper of appropriate length? Yes ____ No ____ Other ____

Comment:

3. Is the thesis clear, well argued *and* well-substantiated? Yes ____ No ____ Other ____

Comment:

4. Is the argument sufficiently original or innovative? Yes ____ No ____ Other ____

Comment:

5. Is the paper well organized? Yes ____ No ____ Other

Comment:

6. Is the writing style appropriate and effective? Yes ____ No ____ Other

Comment:

Overall Assessment

Please indicate your recommendation:

Publish immediately, the paper is acceptable as it is ____

Publish after minor revisions, as indicated in the review ____

Revise manuscript, according to reviewer's suggestions, and resubmit ____

Reject manuscript ____

Challenge three: keeping track

- The “journal editor’s” task
 - Scheduling (importance of timely reviews)
 - Accounting (giving credit where it is due)

Challenge four: getting students to respond to feedback

- Submit:
 - Cover letter
 - “How you have responded to your reviewer(s)”
 - “If you disagree with the comments of your reviewer(s) please explain why”
 - Original draft
 - Peer feedback

“The process of writing and rewriting the papers was the most useful part of the course for me. My papers got better as the term progressed” (300-level class)

“The writing, rewriting and the editing really helped to clarify my ideas and was a great benefit. I don't know if I improved as much as I'd like to have, but the format we used will help me continue to improve, I hope” (300-level class)

References

- Manoa Writing Program: “Peer Review”
http://www.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/peer_review.htm
- Setting up peer review groups:
http://www.uwp.vt.edu/html/online_resources/teaching/olr_menu_03_sub_2.htm
- Martin Maner, *The research process: a complete guide and reference for writers*: “Peer review guidelines”
<http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/maner/resources/peerreview.htm>