

Peer Reviewing

All writers can benefit from an interested audience, especially one that offers constructive and honest advice during a writing project. And who could make a better audience than your peers? The information on the next four pages will help you respond to others' writing, accept constructive criticism, and improve your writing skills while working in a group.

Valuing Feedback

Your fellow writers can tell you what does and doesn't work for them in your writing. This feedback is valuable throughout the writing process, but it is especially helpful during revising. At this point, you need to find out if your writing makes sense, if it holds the reader's interest, and so on.

Some experts go so far as to say that talking about writing is the most important step in the writing process. By sharing ideas and concerns within the group, writing becomes a meaningful process of learning rather than just another assignment. This enthusiasm is bound to have a positive effect on your final products.

"Comment on what you like in the writing. What you say must be honest, but you don't have to say everything you feel."

—Ken Macrorie

Maintaining Good Relations

To maintain good relations among group members, be specific with your comments or questions about their writing. For example, an observation such as "I'm not sure the closing connects with the thesis of your essay" will mean much more to a writer than a general (negative) comment such as "Your closing is boring" or "Make your closing more relevant." The specific observation helps the writer to deal with a problem in his or her work.

Always base praise on some element or quality in the writing: "The series of questions and answers is an effective way to organize your ideas." (or) "There is an energy in this writing that I really like."

INSIDE INFO

Your ability to make observations will improve with practice. At first, you may comment only on a surprising detail or a point you don't understand. That's fine. Just keep trying and listening.

