

Peer Review Letter Guidelines

The peer review letter should be typed, spell-checked, etc. It should cover about a single-spaced page, but if it is longer, this is certainly not a problem. I also encourage you to write comments directly on your copy of the essay draft.

Peer review letters should respond to the cover letter of the essay, especially in terms of whatever concerns the essay's author has brought up. There are also five major categories of criticism, all of which should be covered in the letter:

Thesis & Motive: comment on how clear, arguable, focused, and original the essay's thesis is. Is the thesis easily identifiable? Well-expressed and well introduced? How well does the essay motivate the reader to continue with the essay?

Evidence & Analysis: comment on how well the arguments in the essay were supported by evidence (quotes and summaries) from the texts, and how well the author analyzed that evidence. How convincing were the arguments? How detailed was the analysis? Note also that evidence should be introduced not only as support, but also as complications and arguments *against* the thesis, which must then be analyzed and shown to be less convincing than the arguments for the thesis. Arguments should be both complex and clearly explicated.

Structure: comment on how well the essay structures the overall argument. Are there smooth transitions between paragraphs? Is the evidence arranged in a convincing manner? Does the essay gradually develop more complex ideas? How logical, engaging, and clear is the structure?

Style: comment on the use of language and tone -- how well does the essay establish and maintain a good academic style? Is the language clear and well-chosen? Are the arguments concise yet compelling? Is there a good variety of sentence structure and vocabulary? Does each paragraph present the reader with a well-rounded argument, not combining arguments, nor breaking them up unnecessarily? Does the essay sound good both to the ear (if read aloud) and look good to the eye (no long unbroken blocks of text)?

Suggestions for Revision: Reiterate or concentrate on specific suggestions for revising the essay. Does the thesis need re-writing or focusing? Should the argument paragraphs be rearranged? Is there a particular argument that needs to be re-visited? Do long sentences or paragraphs need to be broken here and there? Give *specific* suggestions.

In addition:

Never hesitate to also say what you think the author did well!

Suggest an alternative title for the essay, based on your reading of it and what you thought were the important themes, arguments, or tone of the piece.