Peer Review #5: Encouraging Revision and Assessing Peer Reviews
by Lucy Bryan Malenke

Despite its many benefits, the peer-review process isn't worth much if it doesn't translate into better writing or help develop better writers. One frustration I've experienced in my own classes and that I regularly hear about from my colleagues is that students don't use the feedback they receive in peer reviews to improve their drafts. So what can you do to encourage revision and ensure that peer review is a worthwhile process?

1. *Encourage revision by providing sense-making support.* Students who aren't used to engaging in revision may not know how to use peer feedback or may choose to make superficial improvements while ignoring bigger concerns. Experts advocate that instructors help their students reflect on the reviews they have received and translate comments into action steps (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Wichmann, Funk, & Rummel, 2018). One study found that students were more likely to use peer-review feedback when they completed the following "sense-making support" activity (Wichmann, Funk, & Rummel, 2018, p. 170):

1	2		3		4		5	6	7
Copy your received comments into this column.	I understand the comment.		I agree with the comment.		I am going to use this comment.		I will improve my essay by doing the following:	Done	Mark the three most important comments with an X.
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		✔	
Comment 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	
…	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	

   You can also talk to your students about how to engage in the revision process and what kinds of changes you expect in their final drafts.

2. *Model the revision process.* Consider showing your students drafts of your own writing, along with comments from a colleague or peer reviewer, and explaining how you engaged in the revision process (Hansen & Liu, 2005).

3. *Have students mark their revisions with footnotes.* Poe and Gravett (2016) recommend having students document their revisions and give credit to their reviewers in footnotes—an activity that also nods to scholarly citation practices in many disciplines.

4. *Assess the peer-review process.* Whether you choose to formally evaluate peer reviews, scholars recommend that you monitor the quality of peer feedback and adjust your instruction and peer review procedures accordingly (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Topping, 2009). You might also consider using one or more of the following options for holding reviewers accountable for giving feedback and writers accountable for using that feedback to revise:
   - Grade the peer-review comments. Grading and providing feedback with on the first round of peer reviews may be worthwhile if your class includes multiple peer review assignments (Topping, 2009); however, this may be too time-consuming for many instructors. Alternative grading strategies include assigning a check, check-plus, or check-minus to completed peer

reviews or simply giving students credit for completing a required number of peer reviews. Consider incorporating peer review into the final grade for a writing assignment, which signals that peer review is an important part of the writing process.

- A less time-consuming option than grading is to read a random sample of peer-review comments and to provide the class with general observations about their performance as peer reviewers (Topping, 2009).
- Ask writers to provide feedback on the peer-review process via a paper or online survey; writers could also rate or evaluate their reviewers, and reviewers could assess their own performance.
- Ask writers to submit the sense-making support activity above or to mark their revisions with footnotes.
- Alternatively, you might require writers to include a cover letter with their final drafts that reflects on the peer-review process (both giving and receiving reviews) and how it influenced the changes they made to their final drafts.

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