

**COLLABORATIVE
LEARNING
TECHNIQUE****27***Peer Editing***Characteristics**

Group Size	PAIRS
Time on Task	2 HOURS
Duration of Groups	MULTIPLE SESSIONS
Online Transferability	HIGH

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE In this CoLT, student pairs critically review and provide editorial feedback on each other's essays, reports, arguments, research papers, or other writing assignments. Peer editing helps teach students how to identify the features of good and poor writing in the work of others, thus developing critical evaluation skills that they can apply to their own writing. It also provides student authors with constructive criticism so that they can improve their papers before submitting them for a grade.

PREPARATION Students are not always skilled at critiquing writing, so they will need training and guidance on what kinds of things to look for and how to make constructive editorial comments. To facilitate editing and to help monitor this activity, create a Peer Review Form that lists the elements students should be looking for when they critique each other's work.

- PROCEDURE**
1. Students work in pairs, taking turns describing ideas for the paper that each individually intends to write. As each student describes his or her ideas, a partner takes notes, asks questions, and makes suggestions.
 2. Each student conducts research for the individual paper, keeping an eye open for material that might prove useful to the partner.
 3. Students write their papers individually.

4. Within each pair, students exchange paper drafts for peer editing. Student editors make proofing marks and comments directly on the paper and score or rate the paper with a Peer Review Form. Student editors also complete and sign the Peer Review Form, indicating their ratings of each of these elements.
 5. Each author revises his or her paper, taking the peer editing into consideration.
 6. Authors attach the Peer Review Form to the final draft and submit it to the professor for evaluation.
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EXAMPLES

Introduction to Philosophy

Professor Watts Itmene decided to use Peer Editing in conjunction with the paper he was assigning as a final class project. He formed pairs, and asked students to consider the question, *What is the difference between appearance and reality?* He asked student partners to discuss and then each select one of the philosophers they had studied during the semester to write a paper on how that philosopher had addressed the topic. The students conducted research in the library and also accessed a Web site Mr. Itmene had created that contained multiple links to philosophy Web sites. Whenever students came across a resource that they thought might be useful to their partners, they made a note of it. Professor Itmene set aside ten to fifteen minutes during class each week for student partners to check each other's progress and share anything they believed would be helpful. Several weeks before the paper was due, he set aside the entire class session for students to edit and rate each other's papers. By having students edit in class, he was available to answer questions, and he also believed that his presence ensured the task was taken seriously and done thoroughly. Students revised their papers based on the editorial feedback. They attached the earlier draft that included peer editing to their final draft and submitted them both to him for evaluation.

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Composition, Critical Reading, and Writing

One of the main goals in this foundational English course was to help students develop techniques and practice expository and argumentative writing. A significant number of the students came to the course with poorly developed writing skills; many had just

completed a preparatory ESL or remedial class sequence. In the traditional on-campus version of the class, the instructor had students write in class during several sessions each week so that she could circulate among students, checking and providing formative feedback on each student's work. When she noticed a recurring problem, she was able to interrupt the writing to discuss it with the whole class. This kind of interaction was not possible in the online version of the course. The instructor was concerned that if she were to give the amount of editorial feedback each individual student needed, the workload in the online course would be overwhelming.

She decided to implement Peer Editing. She designed a Peer Review Form that included a comprehensive list of the kinds of elements required in effective writing. For each of the writing assignments, she formed pairs and had partners edit each other's work using the word processing program's tracking features. Students submitted the original draft and the peer-edited draft when they turned in to her their revised final draft. She assigned separate grades for each component and task. By giving substantial weight to the editing grade, she offered an incentive for students to do this task thoroughly. She believed that Peer Editing helped provide students with the substantive formative feedback they needed without overwhelming her. Additionally, by helping students to identify writing problems in the work of their peers, she knew students developed evaluation skills that they could apply to their own writing.

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Introduction to Psychobiology

An upper-level psychology professor had students conduct an empirical study. Their final project was to write up the results in a formal research paper. He assigned students to Peer Editing groups so that they could give each other advice and feedback on their writing. He used a formal Peer Review Form from a top-tier journal to guide student feedback. In particular, students were to look for items related to the form of the research article such as significance of the problem, research design and methods, significant results, adequate conclusions, as well as providing advice about writing mechanics and style. The professor believed that Peer Editing improved significantly the quality of the papers students submitted to him, and also gave students exposure to the review process that was standard in the field.

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ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION

Students can easily exchange papers for peer editing by sending their papers as e-mail attachments. Editors can make comments and corrections either in capital letters or a different font color or style, or using the tracking features available in standard word processing programs. Also consider investigating specific technology tools for calibrated peer review processes.

VARIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

- Assign students to a base group of four students so that more than one person reviews each paper.
- Have partners help each other in the overall organization of the paper. For example, in the initial discussion, the listening student produces an outline for the author to consider. Partners also draft opening paragraphs together. This may prove challenging for students; however, these two steps may help alleviate some of the "writer's block" that can occur when students face a blank page (Millis & Cottell, 1998, p. 116).
- Extend the procedures by having students do two edit and rating sessions for each paper, thus giving authors the opportunity to revise their papers twice before final submission.
- Consider having students submit the earlier drafts and edited drafts so that you can assess and evaluate progress.
- Use this technique less formally. Simply have students exchange written work with partners for feedback, without completing a Peer Review Form or spending a significant amount of time editing and correcting.
- In addition to submitting the comments of peer reviewers, have student authors submit responses to the comments addressing why they did or did not follow the advice.
- Grade each component of the project. For example, consider giving a grade on the initial draft, the peer editing, and the final composition. You might also evaluate students on how they responded to the review.

OBSERVATIONS AND ADVICE

Students may not be comfortable critiquing each other's writing. They may simply state that the work is good and needs no improvement, which defeats the purpose of peer editing. To promote substantive and constructive feedback, make sure your students understand that peer editing consists of commentary on *all* aspects of effective writing, including a clear thesis, good support, well-constructed topic sentences, coherent transitions, a logical organization, plus surface corrections including grammar, spelling, and punctuation (Millis & Cottell, 1998, p. 116). A Peer Review Form that includes a checklist with each aspect clearly identified will help guide student efforts.

Link part of the student's grade to the level of effort he or she puts into the critique of another's work. Grading the review itself will encourage students to give more thoughtful responses to their peers and discourage them from giving uniformly positive ratings that were not warranted.

Have students debrief on the process, telling them to consider how well they worked together and what actions they will take in the next peer-editing situation. Also consider having them thank each other for the help and congratulating each other upon completion.

Self- and Peer Evaluation forms may be used to give you feedback on how helpful students were to each other.

- KEY RESOURCES** Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K. (1998). *Active learning: Cooperation in the college classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G. (1998). *Cooperative learning for higher education faculty*. American Council on Education, Series on Higher Education. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

Collaborative Learning Techniques

**A Handbook for
College Faculty**

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