

Guidelines for Peer Review

Consider the Topic

- Has the writer put forth an interesting intellectual problem or question? In other words, has the writer constructed a problem that will require a complex, thoughtful answer?
- Does the problem seem impossibly broad? Too narrow? If so, how might the writer narrow or broaden the topic so that it is more appropriate or manageable?
- Do you as a reader care about this question? Or do you feel, "So what?" And why?
- What might the writer do to get a more interesting "take" on the topic?

Thesis and Introduction

- Does the thesis sentence present an argument, or is it simply a declaration of personal feeling? A statement of fact?
- If there is no thesis statement—if the writer has instead raised a question or posed a problem—is that question or problem adequately interesting? Is it clearly stated?
- What is your reaction to the thesis/question/problem thus far? Why do you feel this way?
- Does the introductory paragraph define all terms important to understanding the thesis? If the paper is a research paper, does the introduction "place" the thesis or question within the larger, ongoing scholarly discussion about the topic? Is there enough context? Too much? What do you recommend?
- Is the language in the thesis vivid and clear? For example, has the writer structured the sentence so that the important information is in the main clause? Has the writer used subordinate clauses to house less important information? Has the writer used parallelism to show the relationship between parts of the thesis? In short, is this thesis the very best sentence that it can be?
- Does the introduction engage you? Why or why not?

Structure

- Does the structure make sense? If so, what do you think works particularly well? If not, why not? Where, precisely, does the argument lose you?
- Are all of the main points relevant to the thesis? If not, should the writer omit the irrelevant points, or should the writer rewrite the thesis to accommodate these ideas?
- Does the argument seem logical? Why or why not?

- Does the writer have sufficient support for each point? Are you convinced? Why or why no?
- Does the writer acknowledge other points of view about the topic? If not, how and where might the writer do so?
- Is the argument thorough? Has the writer covered the ground? If not, show the writer where you aren't convinced, and say why.

Paragraphs

- Does each paragraph limit itself to a single argument point, clearly developed? If not, is the writer justified in bending this principle?
- Does the topic sentence further the argument? Give the topic sentences the same "so what?" test that you gave the thesis sentence. If the topic sentences aren't relevant or interesting, how might they be improved?
- Does each topic sentence clearly connect to the paragraph before?
- Does the topic sentence control the paragraph? Why or why not?

Evidence

- Does the writer have enough evidence to support the paper's idea? Too much evidence and not enough analysis? Where does this happen?
- Does this evidence clearly support the assertion the writer is making, or is the writer stretching it?
- If the writer is stretching it, what can the writer do to persuade the reader that this stretch is worth making?

Sentences

- Are the sentences clearly written? Are they grammatically correct?