

Responding to Writers

Research and advice on how response helps writing

Various Forms of Feedback

- Who
 - Instructor
 - Peers
 - Writing Center Consultants
- When
 - Early stages
 - Drafting stages
 - Final stages
 - Formative v. Summative
- Don't have to respond to every piece of writing, the whole writing, or every issue in a given piece of writing
- This presentation focuses on revision-oriented whole drafts



Commenting for Editing Vs. Commenting for Revision (Bean)

EXHIBIT 5.2

Editing-Oriented Commenting Strategy

Spell author's name correctly!

Garit Harden and Peter Singer have both
written essays that are thought provoking.
Harden has the strongest argument, ^{comma splice} on the
other hand, Singer has some good things to say
too but his arguments aren't as strong as
Hardin's because he is to idealistic. Meaning

Look up to,
too, two

frag.

he believes people will give up things like
color TV and stereos to thrid world poor
people even though they (the rich people) will
have earned these things (TV and stereos)
through their own hard work. This is what I
don't like about Singer. Hardin believes in
private property and I do too.

Don't put
antecedents
of pronouns in
parentheses
after the
pronoun.

Another weakness of Singer is . . .

EXHIBIT 5.3

Revision-Oriented Commenting Strategy

Garit Harden and Peter Singer have both written essays that are thought provoking. Hardin has the strongest argument, on the other hand, Singer has some good things to say too but his arguments aren't as strong as Hardin's because he is too idealistic. Meaning he believes people will give up things like color TV and stereos to third world poor people even though they (the rich people) will have earned these things (TV and stereos) through their own hard work. This is what I don't like about Singer. Hardin believes in private property and I do too.

→ Another weakness of Singer is . . .

Good transition but implies that previous paragraph was about a "first weakness"—e.g., Singer's idealism?

In your next revision break the weaknesses of Singer into separate chunks and develop each. Also edit for sentence errors!

Is this your first point about Singer — "A first weakness of Singer is that he is too idealistic" (?) Expand and explain

Excellent insight here—different attitudes about private property are at the heart of their differences—but you raise the point and then drop it without development



The Purpose of Commenting?



The Purpose of Commenting?

To Coach Revision

Sequence writing assignments
and build time for revision and
feedback



Types of Response (Simmons)

Table 1
Types of peer response observed

Type of response	Definition	Example
Global praise	Intended to make the writer feel good about his or her work.	"Great paper" (no reasons given).
Personal response	Focuses on the psychological involvement of the writer as a person, not as a writer.	"You sound like a depressed kid."
Text playback	Focuses on the ideas or organization of the text.	"I think you have an excellent conclusion—it shows how you've changed and grown from your experiences."
Sentence edits	Focuses on one or more sentences or grammar.	"Run-on sentence."
Word edits	Focuses on the use of words or spelling.	"You seem to repeat 'family institution.' Maybe you should try an alternative phrase."
Reader's needs	Focuses on the needs or the reactions of the reader.	"This confuses the reader a little bit. At first glance I think that you are black, experiencing racism in that way."
Writer's strategies	Focuses on facilitating the writer's work by discussing the techniques that were used or could be used by the writer.	"In the fourth paragraph you get into the 'meat' of the experience. You might be able to increase the impact of this section by not using chronological order. (Maybe start with him getting fired, then tell the circumstances leading up to it.)"

Guidelines for Writing Effective Commentary (Hedengren, 96-97)

- Read the paper once without marking it
- Comment on substantive issues
- Respond respectfully as a reader
- Don't edit, but do note patterns of error
- Write a substantive endnote

General Strategy for Commenting on Drafts: A Hierarchy of Questions (Bean)

Does the Draft Follow the Assignment?

- If not, no sense in commenting further
- Encourage writer to reread assignment
- Encourage writer to seek help from you

Does the Draft Address a Problem/Question? Does it Have a Thesis?

- Where does it seem to be “headed?”
- Does it wrestle with a real problem or issue?
- Does it have a thesis?
- Is it operating in the appropriate genre/medium?
- Does it address its ostensible purpose?

What is the Overall Quality of the Writer's Ideas/Argument?

- Sample Comments:
 - Interesting idea!
 - Nice comparison of X to Y here.
 - Expand and explain? Could you give an example?
 - Could you be overlooking X's point of view here?
 - There may be more summarizing in this part than you need.
 - What's your evidence for this assertion?

Is the Draft Organized Effectively?

- Do the title and intro orient the reader to the draft's purpose?
- Could the reader easily outline the draft or write a summary of the argument?
- Can the reader tell the purpose or function of each paragraph?
- Are the paragraphs unified and coherent?
- Do some parts need more development?
- Can parts be deleted without harming the overall argument?
- What seems to be missing from the draft?
- Can parts be shifted around at all?

3 Quick Ways to Comment on Organization

- Use marginal notes to indicate where you are lost or confused
- Comment on the title and introduction
- Comment on topic sentences and transitions

Suggestions for Writing End Comments that Encourage Revision

- 3-Step Template:
 - Strengths, then
 - Summary of a limited number of issues, then
 - Recommendations for revisions
- Privilege Specificity

What can the WC do for me?

- Works with student writers at any level, at any stage in the process
- Works with faculty in compiling writing resources specific to course/discipline
- Works with faculty on writing assignment design, writing assessment design, assignment sheet clarity, and more
- Provides electronic resources for students and faculty:
<https://www.cmich.edu/colleges/chsbs/Centers/WritingCenter/Pages/Resources.aspx>

Works Cited

Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011. Print.

Hedengren, Beth F. *A TA's Guide to Teaching Writing in All Disciplines*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. Print.

Simmons, Jay. "Responders Are Taught, Not Born." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 46.8 (2003): 684-93. Print.