

ROUGH DRAFT PEER REVIEW

Start by reading the essay once without making any written comments.

Next, go back and underline the thesis statement in the introduction. After you do this, SKIM the rest of the paper, and try to identify the topic sentence in each paragraph (a statement of the paragraph's main idea in sentence form). Underline each of them.

Go back to the beginning of the paper and start making written comments, using the guide below. As you do this:

- If you come across information that seems irrelevant or unnecessary for proving the thesis, write something like "Is this necessary?" or "Padding?" next to them.
- If you come across a sentence that is a fragment/incomplete, or doesn't seem to convey a complete idea, write something like "Frag" or "Incomplete idea."
- If you come across a sentence or phrase that is wordy, ambiguous, or unclear, write "Could be simplified," "Ambiguous" or "Could use clarification."

Introduction

Is there a thesis statement?

Is there a clear, concise statement of the paper's thesis? (It's okay if it's not just a single sentence, but it should not be more than two if possible.) Does the thesis indicate the author's conclusions about the argument's strength of support (whether the argument is valid, strong, or weak) and the truth of the argument's premises?

Clarity of thesis statement?

Is the thesis stated as clearly as it could be? Is the thesis worded in a straightforward and confident way? Can you suggest better wording for the thesis?

Is there a clear roadmap?

Does the author provide a roadmap of the paper (a summary of what s/he will do in the paper) in the introduction? If so, does the roadmap make sense?

General comments on the intro.

Make suggestions for how the introduction could be reworded, rearranged, or generally improved.

Description (reconstruction & explanation) of the argument

Is the explanation of the argument complete?

After reading the author's presentation and explanation of the argument, do you feel like you have a solid understanding of the argument? Are all potentially confusing claims and terms adequately explained? If not, describe what could use further explanation.

Is the reconstruction of the argument complete?

Is the argument complete? Could any premises be added to make it clearer how the existing premises work to support the conclusion? When explaining (or analyzing) the argument, does the author seem to mention any premises that aren't included in their reconstruction?

Is the reconstruction of the argument concise?

Are there any unnecessary premises—claims that don't play a role in supporting the conclusion?

Is the reconstruction confusing terms or phrases?

If there are phrases that you think are ambiguous, vague, or unnecessarily technical, indicate which. If you can think of an alternative, suggest it.

Is the explanation of the argument organized in a way that makes it very easy to follow?

Often, it is best to explain the argument premise-by-premise (skipping any premises that don't need further explanation). Does the author go premise-by-premise? If not, would it be clearer if s/he did?

General comments on the description and explanation of the argument

Make suggestions for how the author could improve his/her statement and explanation of the argument.

Evaluation of the strength of support (how well the Ps support the C)**Does the author state his/her conclusion about the strength of support?**

Does the author explicitly state whether the argument is valid, strong, or weak?

Is there a clear explanation of WHY the author draws that conclusion?

Does s/he explain WHY the argument is valid, strong, or weak? Is this explanation very clear? Indicate anything that could use clarification.

Is the explanation convincing?

Is the author's argument for why the argument is valid / strong / weak convincing? Could you point out something the author hasn't thought of?

Evaluation of the truth of the argument's premises**Does the author state his/her conclusion about the truth of the premises?**

Does the author either: (A) explicitly state that s/he thinks that all of the premises are true, or (B) state which specific premise(s) s/he believes is false?

If the author claims that one or more of the premises are false:

Does s/he provide an argument for WHY the premise(s) is false?

Is the writer's argument for why the premise(s) is false easy to understand? If there are parts that could use clarification, indicate which.

Is there sufficient evidence to support each claim? Indicate which parts of the argument (if any) could use additional support.

Do you find the writer's argument convincing, based on the supporting evidence and reasoning, or is there something the author hasn't considered?

If the author claims that the argument is sound or cogent (i.e. it's valid or strong AND has all true premises):

Does s/he describe a potential objection to the argument?

If so, does the author provide an argument for WHY this potential objection should be rejected?

Is there sufficient evidence to support the writer's claim that the potential objection should be rejected? Indicate which parts of this argument could use additional support (if there are any).

Do you find the writer's refutation of this objection convincing, or is there something the author hasn't considered? Which parts of the argument could use additional support?

Organization / structure of the paper

Are there clear topic sentences?

In the evaluate section of the paper, the writer should be providing support for one key idea in each paragraph. This idea can be thought of as the conclusion of the paragraph. Is there a sentence in each paragraph that summarizes the key point of the paragraph? If there is not a topic sentence for one of the paragraphs, can you suggest one? If there is a topic sentence, but it could be clarified or simplified, indicate which, and suggest a revision if you can think of one.

Are the topic sentences located in the best places?

Writers often put topic sentences last in the paragraph, as it seems odd to conclude something before you've provided support for it. However, when you're reading a paper, it's often helpful if the author gives away the conclusion before supporting it—to have the topic sentence at the start of the paragraph. You can state the key idea again at the end of the paragraph, but it's helpful to include it upfront as well. When the topic sentence is at the end of the paragraph, until the reader gets to it, the reader is often left wondering, "Where is this going?" or "How is what the author saying here relevant?" **Readers:** Are there any places in the paper where you were wondering these things / where it might help if the writer moved the topic sentence earlier in the paragraph?

Is there ONE key points per paragraph?

Is each paragraph centered on **one and only one** idea, or do the ideas need to be separated more in any places?

General comments on the structure / organization

Comment on the overall structure of the paper: Is the overall structure of the paper coherent? Could it be improved? Does the writer follow a logical sequence of claims and evidence so that the paper is easy to follow? Do the paragraphs seem to occur in a logical sequence? Could the impact of the argument be enhanced by changing the order of certain paragraphs?

GENERAL COMMENTS

Is there any irrelevant material?

Are there any paragraphs that do not seem to clearly support the thesis (i.e. the author seems to go on a tangent)? Is there any topic sentence that needs to be restated in order to more clearly indicate how it is relevant to the thesis?

Do you have any ideas about rephrasing?

If you noticed a sentence, phrase, or passage that you have an idea of how to reword, rearrange, or otherwise improve, rewrite your alternative for the writer here or on the paper next to the sentence, phrase, or paragraph.

Strengths and weaknesses

What are some strengths and weaknesses of this paper? Make at least one positive comment and at least one negative comment. Try to be constructive and polite. You could comment on writing style, organization, attention to detail, originality and sophistication, etc. Does he have a particular strength? A great explanation of a difficult idea? A really powerful insight? Is his paper well organized? Good use of supporting evidence? An especially well written phrase?