

Peer Editing Guidelines and Example

1. **Be respectful.** Never use discouraging or demeaning words when you peer edit. Your goal is to help your peer, not embarrass or criticize. Remember others are editing your work as well. Think of how you would like to be treated.
2. **Answer every question on the Paragraph Revision Checklist.**
3. **Be positive.** Always point out strengths before discussing things that could be improved
4. **Be specific.** Never give a simple “yes” or “no” answer to the questions on the peer editing checklist. Expand, explain, and give specific feedback. Point out exactly where errors occur so that the writer knows what you are referring to.
5. **Don’t Rewrite for them.** You may be tempted to just rewrite the paragraph for your peer. However, this will not help them learn. Point out specific areas that could be revised, offer specific suggestions, but let your peers make revisions on their own.

Sample Peer Editing Assignment:

Sample Student Paragraph:

One major thing I can think of right off my head of a big stereotype is the ads that are in magazines, and magazines in general. You never pick up a magazine and there is a larger size woman or man on the cover. They are always fit and skinny which is not even a close comparison to the average human today. Having that has a negative attitude on how people see themselves. Most people want to change their appearance so they can look more like what the magazines are trying to make the average American, which is far from the average person. I know that this has a negative effect on people and their self esteem because I have looked at their ads and covers and said, “Gee I wish I could actually look like that.” It is not a good way to think at all. You should be proud of what you look like or you should try to change your appearance.

Peer Editor’s Name:

Topic Sentence

- ✓ Does the paragraph have a topic sentence that clearly states the main point of the entire paragraph?
- ✓ Is the topic sentence the first sentence?

Editor’s comments:

Unhelpful: No, the topic sentence is not clear, but yes, it is the first sentence.

Helpful: The topic sentence attempts to state the main point, that magazines images distort reality. I would suggest making the topic sentence more simple and straight-forward so that it really states the main argument of the paragraph. Perhaps something like “Images of unrealistically thin models in magazine ads distort reality and cause harm.”

Supporting Sentences

- ✓ Does each sentence directly support the topic sentence?
- ✓ Does the paragraph include examples and explanations to back up the topic sentence?
- ✓ Do supporting sentences contain specific detail and description?

Editor's comments:

Unhelpful: Yes, most of the sentences do talk about magazine ads

Helpful: You do a good job of sticking to the subject. Consider adding more details and examples.

Concluding Sentence

- ✓ Does the last sentence sound final?
- ✓ Does the last sentence refer back to the topic sentence and summarize the main point?

Editor's comments:

Unhelpful: No, the last sentence is confusing.

Helpful: I like the way the last sentence suggests a solution to the problem—that people should be happy with their appearance. What do you mean by “or you should try to change your appearance?” Doesn't this contradict your main point? Make sure you refer back to the main argument in the topic sentence—that magazine ads are harmful—then add a solution to the problem. For example:

Coherence

- ✓ Are ideas presented in a logical order?
- ✓ Are there transitional words and phrases both between sentences and within sentences?

Editor's Comments:

Unhelpful: This paragraph has no transitions so it is unorganized and confusing.

Helpful: Here is an area where I really think you can improve your paragraph drastically with some revision. Consider organizing your main points so that you have 3-4 main points you want to make. Then introduce each point with a transition word or phrase so that the reader can follow your main ideas. Here is a possible outline for organizing the body paragraph:

1. Topic Sentence (see my comments above)
2. Describe the situation with magazine ads today—emphasize how prevalent the skinny images are.
3. Then discuss 2 or 3 harms that are caused by these images, and introduce each point with a transition. For example: “Initially, images of skinny bodies in magazines lead viewers, especially young people, to try to change their own bodies.” Another example: “This, in turn, may lead to extreme dieting or exercise regimens that are unrealistic and harmful.”

Then explain this before moving on to the next point:

It might be interesting to discuss how this leads to self-esteem problems and even diseases like anorexia, etc.

Grammar, Mechanics and Word Choice

- ✓ Is writing grammatically correct?
 - Fragments?
 - Run-on sentences?
 - Comma Splices?
- ✓ Does writing use correct point of view? (avoid “you” and stay consistent)
- ✓ Is writing mechanically correct?
 - Spelling Errors or Usage Errors?
 - Capitalization Errors?
 - Apostrophe Errors?
 - Other Errors?Editors Comments:

Unhelpful: You need to spend time proof reading and revising because you have a lot of mistakes.

Helpful: Your paragraph could be improved by paying attention to point of view. I noticed that you switch back and forth a lot between saying “I” then “you” then talking about people in general. I would suggest sticking to third person throughout, and discussing people in general and how they are affected by magazine ads.

For example: In the first sentence, you say “I can think of off the top of my head”: First person here is not necessary and it makes it sound too casual.

The next sentence says: “You never pick up a magazine...” You should never use “you” in academic writing.

You say it has a “negative attitude” on people: did you mean a negative “effect”?

General Comments:

Unhelpful: This paragraph could be good if you revise it.

Helpful: I really like this topic and think it is important for us to learn about. You do a good job of sticking to one main point throughout. In general, spend time revising topic sentence, then developing paragraph so that each point directly backs it up. Also, fixing the point of view so that you take out “I” and “you” will help drastically.