

# Peer Evaluation

## What is Peer Evaluation?

Peer evaluation or assessment refers to the many ways in which students can share their creative work with peers for constructive feedback, and then use this feedback to revise and improve their work.



## Why is Peer Evaluation Important?

One of the advantages of developing peer evaluation skills in pupils is that it can enable teachers to manage the learning of their pupils and organise their own resources more effectively. It allows teachers more time to observe how pupils are learning and to focus on the learning of particular groups of pupils who need additional input to clarify misunderstandings, or to extend learning. The main advantage to the pupils is that it provides students with the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills by learning how to offer productive feedback, accept constructive criticism and master revision.

## What are the Characteristics of Good Peer Evaluation?

Effective Peer evaluation should be:

- Considered and thoughtful
- Constructive
- Relevant
- Specific

When conducting peer editing in a class, it is generally best for the teacher to assign partners according to their ability. The class should be divided into weaker and stronger students, and they should plan on doing the peer review process twice:

- The first time, a student from group A should be matched with a student from group B. This will allow a weaker student to take help from a stronger student.
- The second time, allow weaker students to work together and stronger students to work together. It is important to give stronger students a chance to give each other feedback and advice, otherwise stronger students will not improve their writing and they may not feel challenged.

### Peer Review Procedure:

- 1) Student 1 reads his/her story (or assignment) aloud (helps with proofing)
- 2) Student 2 reads his/her story (or assignment) aloud
- 3) Students swap stories (or assignments) and proof read while reading
- 4) Students fill in peer editing sheets
- 5) Students discuss their comments and suggestions

Teachers should hand out the peer review worksheets and guide participants in the procedure outlined above. They should also make sure that pupils are following the agreed learning intentions and should give clear constructive comments and suggestions for improvement.



## What does Peer Evaluation look like?

Examples of peer evaluation in the classroom include:

- **Traffic Light assessment:** students read each others' writing and apply colours (green means explanation is better than the assessor's, yellow means it is of similar quality, red means the assessor feels their answer is better), then discuss the results of the assessment.
- **Paired evaluations with check lists**
- **Group evaluations** or whole class assessments through presentations
- **'Two stars and a wish' peer assessment:** where pupils are invited to provide evaluative comments about the work of peers. A structured format of two positive comments ("things I liked...") to one improvement suggestion or wish ("I would have liked to know more about...") ensures the evaluation is considered and thoughtful. Those evaluating can then be coached in what constitutes 'good', useful or helpful evaluative comments by the teacher.



**Sample Peer Review Questions:** Here is a list of sample peer review questions for a compare & contrast essay.

- 1) Does the topic sentence show the main point? How could it be improved?
- 2) Does the topic sentence catch the reader's attention?
- 3) Is there a clear compare & contrast pattern in the paper? Is it AABB or ABAB?
- 4) Does the paper show the author's personality?
- 5) Are specific examples used to support points made in the essay? If yes, cite one example. If no, cite one place where the author could use a concrete detail to make his/her point stronger.
- 6) Are wording and ideas fresh and interesting? How could it be improved?
- 7) Name three things you liked about the paper.
- 8) Give three comments or suggestions to improve the paper.



## Strategies for Peer Evaluation

Giving evaluations that are both supportive and challenging is a high level skill that needs to be taught and practiced. If pupils are to offer helpful feedback it helps if they are exposed to good modelling. Fundamentally, they must have a clear understanding of what they are to look for in their peers' work. The Class Teacher (CT) must explain expectations clearly to them before they begin.

- **Provide practice sessions:** provide a sample assignment usually written but it could be performed or spoken. As a group, pupils determine what should be assessed and how criteria for successful completion of the task should be defined. The CT gives pupils a sample completed assignment. Pupils assess this using the criteria they have developed, and determine how to convey feedback clearly to the fictitious pupil.
- **Literacy circles** using peer editing check lists can help focus pupil attention on key aspects of a specific task or aspect of the content or process of learning.
- **Use of checklists:** Pupils can also benefit from using rubrics or checklists to guide their evaluations. At first these can be provided by the CT; once pupils have more experience, they can develop criteria themselves. An example of a peer editing checklist for a writing assignment might ask the peer evaluator to comment primarily on the content and organization of the essay. They can help the peer evaluator to focus on these areas by asking questions about specific points, for example, the presence of examples to support the ideas discussed.
- **Pupil-teacher contracts:** Contracts are written agreements between the pupil and CT, which commonly involve determining the number and type of assignments that are required for particular grades. For example, a pupil may agree to work toward the grade of "B" by completing a specific number of assignments at a level of quality described by the CT. Contracts can serve as a good model in goal setting and enable pupils to begin learning how to set learning goals for themselves.
- **Good Self-evaluation and goals setting skills:** a necessary part of effective study skills which enhance the functioning of study groups. Untrained pupils are likely to create lofty long-range goals ("to speak Russian") that do not lend themselves to self assessment. To help pupils develop realistic, short-term, attainable goals, CT can use a framework like SMART targets.
- **Compliments, suggestions and corrections strategy:** explain that starting with something positive makes the other person feel encouraged, e.g. two stars and a wish

## Overview

Peer evaluation is an excellent skill which can be developed within the classroom to encourage pupils to further develop their critical thinking skills. It also enables teachers to manage the learning of their pupils more effectively.

### For further information:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/peer-review-30145.html>  
<http://www.scmsa.org/files/Journal/2010-2011/NazzalPeerandSelf-Assessment.pdf>  
<http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/peer-and-self-assessment-2867>  
<http://voices.yahoo.com/classroom-procedures-using-peer-review-classroom-1727971.html>

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