

Peer Conferencing Guidelines

During the Conference

1. Authors, lead the conference by sharing with your partner or small group some background information about your work:
 - Who is my target audience, and what am I writing about?
 - How far along am I?
 - What is going well?
 - What am I struggling with or working to improve?
 - What aspects of my writing would I like you to comment upon? (Below are some example questions—notice that higher order concerns are listed first.)
 - Which of my ideas are most interesting for my target audience? Where would my target audience be interested in more or less detail?
 - Is the organization (order of ideas) clear and effective? Is my writing consistently on topic? Are the paragraph divisions and transitions appropriate?
 - Do the style, sentence structure, diction (word choice), and tone help to achieve my purposes and address the audience's needs and expectations?
 - Are there grammar/usage/mechanics/spelling issues that occur repeatedly? Is the formatting appropriate and effective?
2. Authors, read your work aloud. Yes, it feels strange. But it helps you to see how you're your audience is responding—and to notice things you may want to change.
3. Group members, respond:
 - What is most successful about the writing so far?
 - How would you respond to the author's questions to you?
 - What questions do you have as a reader?
 - What encouraging words do you have to offer?

Stop there—don't try to fix the writing for your partner; it's condescending and gets in the way of their learning. Additionally, don't try to give advice on every possible aspect of the writing, as that can be overwhelming to the author. If the writer is interested in your suggestions, limit yourself to 2-3 ideas. Let the writer share comments or questions about what s/he will do next. Close the conference with encouraging words.

It is important that these conferences be opportunities for you to take increasing ownership of (and pride in) your writing. Consider how that message is communicated both verbally and nonverbally:

- Give each other time to try to identify problems and to come up with possible solutions. (Using the script above is one way to do this.)
- Give each other physical ownership of your writing. Look on while writers hold on to their own papers. Let them to write reminder comments, revisions, or editing marks on their papers themselves. Ask permission before writing on their work—and do so only when absolutely necessary.

After the Conference

Write a brief note to me (your professor) and hand it in with your draft. Answer the following:

1. What do you think about your writing (process and product) so far?
2. How did your small group respond?
3. What do you think/feel about your partner's responses?
4. What plans do you have for revision?
5. What specific question(s) do you have for me?

