Criticism and revision are a significant component of the writing experience. As a writer you must learn to accept direct criticism (although you don’t have to agree with it) and as a critic you must learn to be direct, honest, and helpful. You are not attacking the writer, you are helping the writer improve the project. Typically the writer will accept some of you advice and disregard the rest of it. If this works well, the writer will be grateful for your contribution.

Steps to be taken:

1. First read the entire paper without marking it up. Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the paper as a whole. See what kind of general impression it leaves with you.

2. Go to the back of this page or to a blank sheet of paper and summarize your general impression realized in step 1 above. To some extent, follow the guidelines below (is there a clear structure to the paper, is it organized properly, does the paper have anything interesting to say, is the style flat or passive, etc. ??).

3. After writing your overall impression, go back through the paper paragraph by paragraph and evaluate the paper again. Find mistakes in grammar. Identify sentences that are poorly written, difficult to understand, or out of place. Look for redundancies. Generally try to identify all classes of mistakes that are listed below. This time make as many notes in between the lines or in the margins as possible. Make sure the writer can understand your comments.

4. Return to the back page or to the blank sheet on which you made your initial criticism and add more summary material based upon the work undertaken in step 3. Again, let the writer know how this paper can be improved.

5. If time permits (or if arrangements have been made to do this outside of class), discuss your criticism with the writer, covering at least the most important points.

6. Give this paper (and attachments if they exist) to the writer. The writer must submit this paper with the finished essay. If the essay is included in the portfolio, this peer review must also be included in the portfolio. This is the writer’s responsibility.

What to look for:

- Clear theme or purpose?
- Is the essay a legitimate critique?
- Written in 3rd person (normally)?
- Correct spelling?
- Is this good writing?

- Good organization?
- Active (rather than passive) voice where possible?
- Strong opening?
- Correct grammar?
- Are quotations and citations present and correct (if appropriate)?

- Proper transition?
- Lively rather than flat prose?
- Good title?
- Correct formatting?