

# Advanced Peer Revision Workshop Instructions

## I. MLA Format

- a. Is the heading correct?
- b. Is the title correctly positioned and in regular font (no italics, underline or enlarged size)?
- c. Does each body paragraph of support have citation, if required?
- d. If this is a source-based assignment, is the Works Cited page correctly formatted—numbered as last page of paper, titled Works Cited, the listings in alphabetical order, all double-spaced?
- e. Does each body paragraph have paraphrased or quoted text from the source or novels? Is it cited properly?

## II. Structure

- a. Underline the thesis statement in the first paragraph (although it may appear in the second or last paragraph as well for more advanced writers, and in longer essays) and the topic sentence in every *body* paragraph. Write these sentences out separately and determine if they flow logically. (Obviously, difficulty in *finding* these sentences implies one must revise).
- b. Read the first and last paragraph sequentially (skipping the body); does the conclusion follow appropriately from the introduction. If not, what needs to be added to one or both paragraphs to complete the sequence of ideas?
- c. Outline the complete paper—thesis, topic sentences, supporting examples to check for completeness and balance. Does each body paragraph have at least one developed piece of support?
- d. Determine whether the introductory paragraph “grabs” the reader’s attention—common, effective beginnings include:
  - i. Ask a question (note: do NOT use second person *YOU* point-of-view). Avoid yes/no questions.
  - ii. State a surprising or shocking statistic
  - iii. Make a concession about the subject of the paper
  - iv. Quote someone else (famous person, or someone interviewed for the assignment—check out *Bartlett's Quotations*)
  - v. Tell an amusing or unusual anecdote related to the subject
- e. Determine whether the concluding or closing paragraph appropriately wraps up all the ideas covered in the essay. Do not use the same strategy to close the essay as is used in the introduction—common effective conclusions include:
  - i. Quote someone about the subject of the paper
  - ii. Make a prediction about the future (as it relates to the subject of the essay)
  - iii. Echo the introduction (tell the first part of an anecdote in the introduction, finish the story in the conclusion)
  - iv. Leave the reader with a question to contemplate (note: do NOT use second person)
  - v. Synthesize the ideas developed throughout the paper, don’t just summarize or repeat the thesis.
  - vi. Answer the “so what” question—why was it so important to read the paper?
  - vii. Challenge the reader to take action or change their minds—particularly effective in a persuasive paper. (Again—NO second person!)
- f. Check for appropriate transition words throughout the essay to improve the flow and clarify the relationship from idea to idea.

## III. Development

- a. Make sure each body paragraph has a clearly developed supporting example or piece of evidence to complete the idea.
- b. In each body paragraph, BLOW UP an element with strong sensory details (sound, taste, smell, touch, sight) to create a strong image or scene for the reader. This strategy is especially effective in narratives like the autobiography and biography papers, but also works in the writing of anecdotes in the persuasive, the editorial, etc.
- c. For long-winded essays, cut 20%, 30%, 40%, 50% of the unnecessary words (believe me, cluttered, repetitive, clichéd language bullocks up most writing). Particularly, eliminate announcing words like “this paper is about” or “I will be covering...” or “I will end with...”
- d. To expand, deepen, make more specific and enrich the ideas of your essay, don’t tack on more sentences to the end, but go back into your early draft and insert new sentences in between the existing sentences.

#### **IV. Style and Voice (Dictionaries and Thesauri use *encouraged*)**

- a. Strong writing in English requires strong, active verbs. Circle all “to be” (am, is, was, are, were, has/have been, being) verbs and revise sentences to use more active verbs. This strategy shifts the writing from a passive to an active voice, which creates more vibrancy in the language. Try to minimize use of the “to be” verb to no more than one appearance per paragraph.
- b. Substitute present or past tense verbs for helping + -ing or +ed words.
- c. Eliminate all worn-out adverbs like “very” and “extremely.” In fact, only allow adverbs that add movement, like “cataclysmically” or “lithely.” Prefer strong verbs over weak verbs accompanied by weak adverbs.
- d. Circle all adjectives and investigate, with the thesaurus, more specific or interesting substitutions that create more zest in the vocabulary.
- e. Check for dangling modifiers—all modifying clauses need to hook on near the word(s) they are modifying.
- f. Eliminate any and all second person point of view. No “you” unless it appears in the essay as part of a direct quote.
- g. Check for commonly misspelled or misused words (there, their, they’re, a lot, its, it’s, to, two, too, accept, except, lie, lay, laying, lying, etc.)
- h. Check for appropriate transition words throughout the essay to improve the flow and clarify the relationship from idea to idea.
- i. Eliminate all clichés. Add in figurative language that is fresh and unexpected: Her freckled face looked like a chocolate chip cookie.
- j. Eliminate all slang words and unconventional spelling. Avoid language that is too chatty or too casual for the written essay.
- k. Eliminate the words “that” and “which” whenever possible.

#### **V. Audience**

- a. As noted above, eliminate any second person point of view (you). This point of view is rarely acceptable in academic papers.
- b. List what the intended reader probably already knows about your subject, or what the reader needs to know and make sure the essay provides complete, but not redundant or unnecessary information. (i.e. is the person wealthy or poor, middle class or working class, college educated or high school drop out, religious or not, newspaper-reader or television news watcher, sports or music fanatic, sixteen years old or forty, male or female, conservative or liberal?) Add additional details or eliminate obvious information.
- c. Determine the tone of the essay—what is its attitude towards the subject of the paper? Is it positive, serious, humorous, critical? Make sure the tone is *properly established in the first paragraph*. Don’t begin a paper on suicide with a joke. Don’t be crude or silly.

**Finally:**

#### **Additional Editing Tips:**

1. Check all spelling and punctuation for accuracy and correctness.
2. Check all facts and direct quotations to make sure they are completely accurate.
3. Format the essay according to the rules of MLA.
4. Spell out single digit numbers.
5. Check for commonly misspelled or misused words and correct (there/their/they’re, a lot, its/it’s, to/two/too, accept/except, lie/lay/laying/lying, etc.).