

USING PEER REVIEW TO IMPROVE STUDENT WRITING SUPPLEMENT 1: EXERCISES FOR AFTER WORKSHOP

Supplement 1: Exercises for After Workshop

If you finish workshop early, choose one or more of the following exercises to do based on what might be most useful to the group or to you given the feedback you received during your workshop.

GROUP EXERCISES

- After working on one of the individual draft exercises below, use class time to share your new discovery with your peers to see if they can see some improvement in your approach to a problem they identified.
- Discuss with the group how the workshop went. What unexpected or interesting comments that came up? What similarities or differences were there between essays? What feedback did you get versus what you expected? Discuss these moments in greater depth.
- What issues in your peers' papers do you respectfully disagree with? What feedback given by your peers might you respectfully disagree with (on your paper or another's paper)? Discuss any differences in opinion you might have.

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES

Issues of Argument

- Write the main argument of your essay on a separate sheet of paper and play devil's advocate. Come up with a list several conflicting points that challenge your argument. Choose one or two significant conflicts and then freewrite about why your argument is still true. Could some of these points be incorporated into your argument to make it stronger or more complex?
- Read your thesis then read your conclusion. Has your thesis evolved beyond its initial ideas? If there isn't a clear sense of evolution, freewrite about the difference between the thesis and the conclusion. If there is no evolution, repeat step one.
- If your peers identified your argument as needing clarification or strengthening, take five minutes or so to freewrite about your argument. You might answer one of the following questions to get started: What was I trying to say and how could it be more clear? What could make my argument more complex? What aspects of the argument did I not consider? At the end of your freewrite, try writing a new thesis statement. Share the new thesis with your peers.

Paragraph Focus/Order

- On a separate sheet of paper, create a reverse outline of the body of your essay by writing out a complete sentence that represents the controlling idea of each paragraph in your essay (this paragraph argues _____), leaving a few spaces between each sentence that you write. If you have trouble identifying the purpose of a paragraph, look back to the paragraph to see if the paragraph is focused (keep in mind that you may need to split a paragraph up, reorder it, or omit unnecessary elements). In the lines in between the sentences you just wrote, explain how each paragraph is connected to the next. If you cannot find a genuine connection, reconsider your paragraph order.
- Examine the nature of your transitions. If the transitions are mostly “Also” or “Another” statements, reconsider your main argument. Is it more like a list than a discussion? Is it complex enough that the essay must offer many points of view on the argument?
- Read through one or more of your paragraphs paying close attention to how one sentence relates to the next. Focusing on a single paragraph, cover up the sentence following the first one and ask yourself where that sentence should naturally lead. Now look at the next sentence. Does it take you where you expect? Does it connect to the final idea in the last sentence or use transitional elements to move to a new idea?

Evidence and Analysis

- Go through the essay and find the evidence you have provided. Underline it. Then underline the analysis that follows each passage of evidence with a wavy line. Are there any examples provided with no analysis? Is there too little analysis or not enough evidence?

Intros and Conclusions

- Look at the intro to make sure it isn’t too broad. Can you cut out the first sentence without losing the overall sense of the paragraph? The next sentence? How many sentences can you remove without affecting the meaning, voice, or clarity?
- Move to the conclusion. Put a bracket around the parts of the conclusion that offer merely summary or information that has already been stated in the essay. How much summary is there compared to new ideas? If the conclusion is merely summary, see how much summary you can remove without affecting the cohesiveness of the essay.
- Freewrite about what you learned from your own argument. How did your argument change you? What new ideas do you have about the world? Use specific examples to discuss this change. Can any of these ideas be incorporated into your conclusion to make it stronger?

General Issues

- Make a revision “to do” list that lists revision tasks you need to do in order of most crucial to least crucial. Be specific in your list! For example, a list item might be “find a more reliable source of evidence for paragraph 3” or “rewrite the conclusion to discuss why the argument matters.”