

Designing a Response Sheet

What is a response sheet?

It's a set of questions or directions that help students take a rough draft and make it better, clearer, more successful.

Who uses a response sheet?

Students do. They can use response sheets to self-evaluate and then revise their own drafts, or they can use response sheets to provide other students with useful input. Response sheets can be completed in class or as a homework activity. Either way, the responsibility for making revision decisions rests with the students.

What makes for a good response sheet?

A good response sheet is not generic, it's assignment-specific. Each of its questions and directions is phrased with the particular assignment in mind (rather than a more vague sense of what good writing is). Thus, a good response sheet embodies the primary criteria for a successful final draft; it's your chance to emphasize what's important. A good response sheet identifies weaknesses and problem areas, but it also identifies strengths to build on. Thus, the response sheet not only makes revision possible, it makes it more inviting and positive. A good response sheet makes the writing process easier, not harder. Finally, a good response sheet is brief; it focuses on what's important.

How do I arrive at the questions/directions for my response sheet?

Two methods suggest themselves here. You could construct a response sheet that moves linearly through the draft. Thus, one of the early questions would deal with how the draft opens, and one of the later questions would deal with how it ends. In short, the response questions would encourage respondents and writers to focus on the organization—beginning, middle, end. The other method involves focusing on specific, important criteria—typically on those that tend to cause students the most trouble. Thus, if students have trouble actually taking a position, the response sheet might ask the respondent to locate and summarize the part of the paper that takes a position.

Example?

See the back of this page.

Sample Response Sheet

You've been talking about topic A for several weeks, and you've made this assignment:

Introduce topic A to a student who has the same background and interest you did at the start of this term. Your readers haven't had the benefit of lecture or reading or homework; your paper (no more than 4 pages) will be their only introduction. Make sure that your final version uses accurate terms and explains them where necessary; make sure it uses at least one illustration from your textbook and one from your lab. Make sure your reader understands not just what topic A is, but also its importance.

Here are some possible questions/directions for the response sheet:

1. Comment on how this paper begins. Is the opening clear? Is it interesting? Is it abrupt or confusing? If this were your opening, what changes would you make?
2. Does this paper anticipate readers' questions about terminology? What terms will readers stumble on?
3. What's the strongest, clearest part of this paper right now? Refer to it by page and by content. What makes it so clear?
4. What suggestions do you have about the textbook illustration?
5. What suggestions do you have about the lab illustration?
6. Suggest priorities for revision. What should this writer do first? Second? And so on.

Peer Review Sheet
Writing 411/511 Essay 3 – Collaborative Report

Team Members _____

College Surveyed _____

Peer Review by _____

Check to make sure each required section is present and is correctly written.

Voice: The voice of this document should be formal (not personal), objective, and straightforward. The style should be concise and informative. A consistent voice should be maintained throughout (i.e., it should not sound like three different people wrote it). The passive voice may be used at times but should not be the predominant voice. After reading through the document, how would you describe the voice of the report?

Content and Focus: This report should not contain an ongoing narrative of the experiences of the researchers as they gathered data, nor should it use first-person pronouns. Researchers, if mentioned, should be referred to in the third person. For example, "Researchers surveyed ten students at the 100 level and six students at the 400 level." Comment on the success or problems of the document in this area.

Comment on the effectiveness of each section. Suggest revisions.

Title Page: Criteria on Instruction sheet.

Abstract: Accurate, self-contained, concise and specific, non-evaluative, coherent, readable, not more than 100 words.

Introduction: Statement of Problem and Purpose of the Study: The variables in your study are the student/teacher split and the 100/400 split. If you had a hypothesis about the predicted results, state it.

Methods:

Participants:

Procedure: Include a copy of your survey in an appendix and refer to it in the procedure section.

Results: The Results section should objectively summarize the data collected and the statistical treatment of them without interpretation. Graphics presenting data should be referred to in the text of the Results section. For example, "As Table 1 shows, teachers and students at the 100 level mentioned grammar more frequently than any other quality in characterizing excellent writing." Comment on the completeness, clarity, and effectiveness of this section.

Discussion: The Discussion section should interpret the data gathered, identify questions raised by the results, draw some conclusions, and suggest implications of the findings for various groups (college teachers, students, high school teachers of writing, etc.). The guidelines asked, "What have I contributed here? How has my study helped to resolve the original problem? What conclusions and theoretical implications can I draw from my study?" Does it do each of those things? If the writers formed a hypothesis about results, they should open their discussion by stating whether the results support the hypothesis or not. Suggest revisions.

Comment on the correctness of this document. Identify problems you noticed.

Peer Review Assignment

This assignment to review another student's writing has at least two purposes. First, it is meant to provide helpful feedback for the original author and to do so without a grade attached to the feedback. All good writing goes through serious revisions and your papers are no exception. Second, this assignment is meant to provide you, the reviewer, with a chance to think carefully about writing – what is persuasive, what is unclear, what works in writing about social science phenomenon.

Overall, your task is to read the paper, write one to two typed full pages (single-spaced, several paragraphs) of helpful comments, and to return the paper with the comments to the author. Your comments should remain anonymous (via your student ID number). However, I want a copy of your comments as well so that I can see what kinds of things you told the original author. This will operate as a check upon all of us in terms of taking the review seriously, responding with constructive comments, and remaining civil in the process. So in sum, you are to write a one- to two-page memo to the author and then bring two copies of the memo, along with the paper, to class on Tuesday, November 11. No exceptions on due date – the authors need your comments so they may begin revisions.

I suggest you organize your comments as follows:

- I. Restatement of what you think the hypotheses in the paper are, or are meant to be.
- II. Strengths of the paper. If the paper is weak throughout, don't feel like you have to make things up (e.g., nice margins!). But be civil and encouraging where you can.
- III. Constructive feedback – what do you think are the most central things to improve? What would make it more clear or persuasive? Give suggestions when possible for how the author might make the improvements.

Notice that this is not meant to be an exercise in correcting grammar and spelling. I will expect all authors to deal with this on their own or with the help of others. If you see lots of these kinds of errors, you could put a small check in the margin near those lines with errors. But, this peer review assignment is meant to focus on substantive and structural strengths and weaknesses of our writing.

On the other side of this paper I have listed those things for which you should be looking and about which you should be commenting.