

Dealing With Criticism

When receiving – and giving – criticism, some simple rules might help you to psychologically handle the criticism more constructively. Please carefully read each suggestion and think about its applications to you.

1. When receiving criticism, listen for the “Ah hah!” inner voice that confirms that the criticism is right on target.

2. Ignore criticism that is ambiguous, inaccurate, or personal. There is nothing to be gained from irresponsible criticism.

3. In order to be a good writer, you have to be willing to be a bad one. Remember that even if you write a truly rotten piece, it is a necessary stepping-stone to better work.

4. Pay attention to those comments that support what you are trying to say.

5. Pay attention to those points that the reader does not understand. You are writing to real people that want to understand what you are trying to say.

6. Remember that the opinions of others can be very valuable. You may find that your critics admire your work more than you do.

7. Don't be offended by the criticism. The criticism is not directed at you, but at your work – with the goal of improving it.

8. I always prefer that my editors (a small group) be harsh and exacting in their criticism. After the paper is published, a much larger group will be reading it (and the embarrassment is potentially much larger). In this context, you have a chance for ungraded criticism before being graded on your work.

Peer Review Guidelines

1. Use the grading criteria as guide as you read over the paper.

2. Your primary task is to read the paper with an eye for: organization, clarity, defined and appropriate arguments, a well-formed discussion, and a logical conclusion. You may also make comments/suggestions about unanswered questions that arise.

3. Make your comments detailed (ambiguous comments will be ignored), indicating the faults of the paper exactly. The writer will not be able to ask you what you mean.

4. Look for, and comment on, positive points of the paper.

5. You may make comments on the copy you were given. However, you should also write a short note to the writer discussing/outlining your criticism.

6. You may note grammar, spelling, and other errors on the paper, but you should focus on the content. The author should be able to proofread his/her own paper.

Grading Criteria

1. The paper clearly addresses the topic and is written in an appropriate style.

2. The paper is well organized with a strong introduction, a well-developed discussion, and an appropriate conclusion.

3. The paper contains a clear and detailed description of experimental methods and hypotheses about the results of the experiments.

4. The content is accurate.

5. The paper contains an appropriate number of references, which are cited in the correct format.

6. There are no more than three grammar and/or spelling errors.

7. The paper is the correct length.