

Workshop Etiquette and Outline

Ground rules:

If it's not useful to the writer, it need not be said.

All comments must be constructive. Do not ever discourage a writer.

Do not ask the writer for autobiographical information.

Comment on the work in front of you, not what you would have written if it was your idea.

Before the workshop:

Read the piece carefully. **Mark the text** with questions, words of appreciation, suggestions for improvement. Be specific. The more specific you are, the more helpful your comments will be.

You will be returning the marked copy to the writer.

Type up/Respond verbally with a brief three-part summary of your response.

1. Interpret: Explain to the writer what you understand the piece to be about. What was the thesis? What was the main argument? What were the points the author was trying to make? What did you understand to be the overall goal of the essay? It is extremely helpful to hear other's interpretations of your writing, therefore be honest on what you understood the essay to be about.

2. Celebrate: Let the writer know what is working well. Be specific. For example, if you like a sentence, identify the image for the sentence and explain why you think it is particularly effective within that paragraph.

3. Suggest: Tactfully and honestly suggest specific ideas for revision. Include specific examples from the piece and explain why you feel revision could strengthen the work, given your understanding of the writer's intentions.

During the workshop:

Treat the writer's work as you want your own work to be treated. Refer to "the essay" or "the author" rather than to the writer's name. Be honest, respectful, thorough, and specific. Never use sarcasm or joke about another's work. Your intentions may be good, but you do not want to risk being misunderstood and hurting the writer's feelings. Be encouraging. Pointing out weaknesses is part of the critical process, but do so in a helpful manner by explaining your reasons and offering concrete suggestions. Pointing out strengths is equally helpful. Letting the writer know what questions you have is another method of offering feedback.

For example:

Bad feedback: "I totally didn't get this paragraph. I don't really have anything to say about it because I don't understand."

Good feedback on the same part: "I did find this paragraph confusing at times, particularly sentence A and B because of the verb confusion in the quotes. However, I do think using secondary evidence to support your argument in this paragraph that gender bias does affect social development, which is what I understood this argument to be about, is strong. Perhaps you can make this point more clear by explicitly stating it at the beginning of the paragraph."

Workshop Etiquette:

For the WRITER Presenting A Draft of An Essay

Ground Rules:

Submit a piece about which you are serious -- a solid draft that you intend to revise using the feedback from the workshop.

Before the workshop:

1. Turn in a clean, complete manuscript to Google Drive. Use a readable, 12-point font, and leave margins wide enough for readers to write comments. Double space essays. Number your pages. Title your work with: Last Name, First Name, Working Title.
2. As you review the draft you plan to submit, write down questions you would like to have answered. These could include sections you are uncertain about and technical questions. Include page numbers, and be specific about the kind of feedback you want, such as ideas, an emotional response, or a critical judgment. Submit these questions to me with your piece at the end (up to 3).
3. Prepare yourself emotionally. Workshops can provide you with invaluable insight into how your work is being read. Workshops are also stressful. Understand that you will not be able to explain the work during the workshop.

During the workshop:

1. Take thorough notes. You may want to set these notes aside for a while after the workshop and then return to them when you are ready to revise.
2. Listen receptively. You are under no obligation to accept each suggestion that is made. You have the last word. But make the most of the opportunity while your readers offer their feedback. Remember, the workshop does not judge you as a person; it is meant to help you become a better writer.

After the workshop:

1. Relax.
2. Maintain your integrity. You do not need to write by consensus. Over time you will learn to recognize the critical voices that are most helpful to you. and not be shaken by those voices that are not as beneficial.

Revision Instructions

When you are ready to revise, please follow the guidelines outlined below:

1. Read through all comments carefully. Do they make sense? Do you have any questions before you revise? Think about where you want to go in your next draft. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current piece, in your opinion?
2. Read the draft out loud, or have someone read it to you. Hearing what you have written makes it easier to catch tired or awkward or redundant words and phrases. It also can help you determine whether your ideas are flowing in a logical manner.