

Reviewing Your Academic Paper

Before you submit your essay or research paper these are the points you should check:

Introduction

- Does the first sentence or two catch the reader's attention?
- How else might the paper begin?
- Does the introduction provide sufficient background and context for the reader?

Thesis

- Is the thesis stated clearly?
- Can you identify the thesis statement?
- Is the thesis focused enough?
- Does the paper fulfill the promise made by the thesis? Why or why not?

Supporting Points

- List the main points made in the draft, in order of presentation.
- Are any points uninteresting to you?
- Are any details irrelevant and should be eliminated (does the paper lack unity)?
- Do any points need to be explained less or more completely?
- Is any information confusing to the reader?

Organization

- Are the points presented in the most effective order? Should the order be changed? If so, how? (order of importance, chronological sequence, spatially)
- Can you suggest ways to make connections/transitions between paragraphs clearer and easier to follow (coherence)?
- Do all paragraphs have a topic sentence?
- Do any paragraphs lack unity, that is, contain irrelevant sentences? Delete the unrelated points or those that do not add to the thesis.
- Which paragraphs are clearest and most interesting to read? Why? Which paragraphs are well developed? Which paragraphs are incomplete and need further development with more supporting points?

Word Usage

- Underline words that are particularly effective – those that draw vivid pictures or provoke strong responses.
- Circle confusing or unclear words.
- Delete unnecessary words e.g. "entire planet" and most qualifiers, such as very, often, hopefully, practically, basically, really, mostly.
- Do any words need to be defined?

Tone

- What kind of attitude does the writing convey? Serious, humorous, satiric, persuasive, passionately committed, highly objective?
- Is the tone consistent throughout the paper?
- If the tone varies, is there a reason for this?

Conclusion

- Does the paper conclude in a memorable way, or does it end abruptly or trail off into vagueness?
- How else might the paper end?

Academic Integrity

- Are all sources and other people's ideas documented?
- Have you referenced even those ideas that you had before you read them in an article or book?
- Have your paraphrased correctly?

Final Thoughts

- What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the paper?
- What surprised you, and why?
- What was the single most important message that the writer communicated to the reader?