Before anything gets published in the “real world”—whether it’s business or government or academe or the non-profit world—it is read and reviewed by other people inside and/or outside the organization and then revised by the author on the basis of that feedback in a process that often involves multiple readings and multiple revisions. That’s how professional writers ensure that their work is sound before sending it out into the world, and it’s how student writers can ensure that their work is sound before sending it to their professors.

The peer review process may take any number of different forms. The rubric below is a generic design that is suitable for almost any student-writing situation and modifiable for your particular writing purposes.

Depending on the course, use of this rubric for your peer review may be either a suggestion or a requirement; see the assignment sheet for the answer to that question.

Follow ALL of these steps diligently to conduct a peer review that is maximally useful for improvement of your own and your peers’ draft essays. Record your responses IN WRITING for the person whose writing you are reviewing; the act of articulating your criticisms will sharpen your understanding of your own and others’ writing.

Being thorough is the only way to make this work genuinely productive instead of merely rote busy-work. You should plan to spend at least 45 minutes on review of someone else's essay—not including the time spent preparing for your partner's review of your draft. All the thinking you do here about another person's writing will be useful to your own writing process, directly and indirectly, as well; think of your peer review work as time spent on your own writing.

FOR THE AUTHOR OF THE ESSAY:

**PART A: CHECKLIST**

Check your own essay repeatedly for the following items. Does your essay:

- clearly frame the problem, question or issue it will address?
- make a specific, limited, and worthwhile literary-interpretive claim or assertion (a thesis) regarding the topic you have chosen?
- cite specific textual evidence (via paraphrase and quotation) in support of its claims and assertions?
- explain how the cited evidence supports the claim (interpretation)?
- depending on the terms of the assignment, fully integrate the thinking of legitimate published scholars on the topic? (See Research Guide and Assignment sheets for more information about acceptable research sources.)
- organize all of the above into a unified, coherent, logical argument?
- follow MLA conventions for essay format and citations?
PART B: PEER REVIEW QUESTIONS

Before you give your essay to a peer for review, **formulate in writing (typed on the draft) three questions you want your reviewer to answer** about how to improve the current version of your essay. These questions may take whatever form is indicated by your own awareness of your writing process in creation of your essay thus far and your identification of problem areas in the essay as it stands. They should not recapitulate the generic questions in the checklist above, but should instead be specific to the content of your essay.

For instance, you might ask for feedback on a particular idea or concept in the argument that you're not sure is logical or convincing. Or you might ask your reviewer to help you evaluate specific places in the essay where you have doubts (or high hopes) about your interpretation of textual evidence. Or you might ask your reader to argue against your main points, in order to identify places where your argument needs to be strengthened by taking account of potential objections on the part of your readers. The possibilities are endless and they should be driven by the particular content of your essay. The point of this procedure is for you to do some very careful assessment of your own writing so that your reviewer can give you the precise feedback that you need.

FOR THE PEER REVIEWER:

PART C: PEER REVIEW

**First**, read the entire essay through to get a basic sense of its topic, approach, and argument.

**Second**, read the essayist's peer review questions, and make notes if you already have some ideas about your answers to them based on your first reading of the essay.

**Third**, reread the essay with the peer review questions in mind, noting in the margins any items or areas that are implicated by those questions.

**Fourth**, respond in writing to each of the essayist's peer review questions, making specific references to relevant sections of the essay and to your marginal notes there.

**Fifth**, alert the essayist to any problematic aspects of his/her essay according to the items on the checklist (Part A, above).

**Finally**, note in writing any other major areas of strength, weakness, or potential that are not implicated in the essayist's peer review questions but that you think are important.