

Using Peer Response

one way to do it

Procedure:

- Students bring in two copies of their draft—copies, not their original
- The teacher collects the copies and redistributes them, giving two different drafts to each student.
- The teacher models the writing of questions for a paragraph of an essay draft.
- As homework, students “work through” each of the two essay drafts.

(Alternatively, the students bring in one copy. The teacher redistributes the copies, one to a student. At the next class meeting, the teacher collects the drafts and the peer responses, then redistributes the drafts to a second student reviewer. The second reviewer should not see the review of the first to avoid being “blinded” by it.)

Student reviewers:

1. write their response questions on separate paper and do not mark the original essay.
2. make no suggestions about ‘cosmetic’ changes, such as style, diction, spelling, syntax, or the like. The questions address content only.
3. write questions only, no comments.
4. make no judgments about the essay or any of its parts.
5. write a minimum of fourteen valid and helpful questions for each essay:
 - Student reviewers write the questions paragraph by paragraph.
 - *Valid* here means questions that help a writer think about making changes.
 - *Helpful* here means that the question is intended to help improve the content.
 - There are no “yes/no” questions.
 - Student reviewers may well *not* know the answer to a question they ask.
 - Questions do not state or imply evaluation, as in ‘Why didn’t you...’ or ‘What the heck is this supposed to mean?’

Assessment:

- Students must comment on the whole essay to get credit.
- Students’ own essay grades are lowered one letter for each peer response not completed.
- Students are penalized for making cosmetic suggestions in writing.