

The Editorial Process

Sometimes writing is fun (it is!); other times, it is tremendously tedious. Editing is always tedious, but it is a necessary step in writing well. This is why even the most prolific and successful writers depend on their editors. Developing good editorial skills is one sure way of improving your papers and, in the end, even your first-draft writing.

For this exercise, you will work in pairs. Each of you will peer edit another's essay. We will follow the guidelines below to complete this exercise.

1. Read without judgment. The first time you encounter a piece of writing as an editor, you want to read it through just to get a sense of the material, themes, and organization.

2. Edit in layers; start with the easiest layer to fix: grammar and spelling. For this initial round of editing, we focus only on those two aspects. The following is a list of some measures you want to evaluate. For this exercise, you want to first circle or highlight spelling and grammatical errors you find. Next, go through the list and evaluate each measure on a four-point scale (1=below average; 2=average; 3=above average; 4=excellent), and provide a couple of comments or examples to help the writer identify the problem(s).

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Comments / Examples</u>
Written materials reflect care and effort		
Punctuation was correct and varied		
Used an appropriate, wide, and sophisticated vocabulary		
Perfect spelling		
Avoided homonym traps		
Sentence structure was strong and varied		
No run-ons		
Subjects always agreed with verbs		

3. Move to the next layer: structure and organization. For this part of the editorial process, you do an objective analysis of strengths and weaknesses in terms of structure and style. This step in the editorial process ignores interest or correctness of content, personal opinion, and significance of the piece. It focuses solely on the building blocks of an essay.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Comments / Examples</u>
Paragraphs were true paragraphs		
Thesis was strong, clear, and insightful		
Introduction provided a good map of the essay		
Body paragraphs began with strong subtheses		
Body paragraphs reflected balance between summary / description and analysis		
Body paragraphs made good use of examples and evidence		

Measure	Score	Comments / Examples
Body paragraphs ended with strong concluding statements that connected back to main thesis		
Transitional sentences connected distinct sections and ideas		
Conclusion effectively recapped main ideas, arguments, evidence		
Appropriate and correct citation was used		
Writing reflected good organization and outlining		
Writing reflected appropriate drafting and editing		
Writing demonstrated a good-faith effort		

4. The icing: topic, content, significance. The final part of the editorial process is the most subjective. It is an evaluation of the ideas and arguments of the essay. Some aspects of this are more objective (Did you understand the topic? Did you follow that one topic through?) than others (Was it good / interesting / convincing? Did the essay say something significant?). As difficult as it is to evaluate on this level, you've got to do it, whether for a peer or for yourself.

Measure	Score	Comments / Examples
Writing reflected a strong and clear understanding of assignment		
Writing reflected a strong and clear understanding of material		
Conclusion gave a good answer to the "so what" question / showed larger significance		
Thesis was interesting and relevant		
Subtheses added sparks to the fire		
Argument was convincing		
Essay left reader thinking in a new way		

5. The final grade. Although you will not be grading most of your own papers, you should be able, through a solid editorial process, to predict with some accuracy the grade you deserve and eventually receive. Although professors' grading systems vary, depending on professor and assignment, most will grade based upon an averaging of the "layers" of writing. For example, an essay that is an "A" grammatically and structurally but a "C" in terms of understanding, ideas, and significance will most likely receive a low B or high C. Now it's your turn to look at the essay you edited with the big picture in mind. Based on all of the parameters measured above, what grade does this essay deserve? Please provide at least two comments / sentences that help to explain or justify your final evaluation.