

Peer Editing

Offering your memoir to someone else to read is a very scary and vulnerable thing. It helps us improve our writing, however, because we are not our own best critic. Ideas that are clear in our own mind are often not so clear on the page. A partner can help you see mistakes and areas to improve that you can't.

In order to do peer editing well, we need to be **sensitive** in what we say to others but be **tough skinned** when it comes to **receiving** criticism. If we all have that attitude, the peer editing will go smoothly, and everyone will benefit.

Peer editing means sharing the positive as well as the negative, but the foundation is always to be **specific**. *General* praise or criticism is not helpful in honing writing skills. All statements must be grounded in precise examples from the paper.

Not Helpful:

- "Your memoir is awesome! Loved it!"
- "Your memoir needs a lot of work."

Helpful:

- "Your description of the puppy made me visualize him clearly."
- "You have 4 run-on sentences and 2 fragments. I marked them here..."

Structure of the Peer Editing Time

1. Sit across the table from your partner.
2. Read the essay *without* a pen in your hand. Read for meaning, and enjoy the paper.
3. Pick up your pen and read the essay through again, marking notes directly onto the essay.
4. Go through the checklist systematically, rereading the essay as necessary. Make notes on the checklist — yes/no, smiley face/frowny face, plus/check mark/minus — use whatever system works for you.
5. Return the paper to the writer. Allow him time to look over your comments and the editing checklist.
6. Discuss your praise and edits.