

Peer Critique Guideline: Development

When you read a paper, whether it is your own or someone else's, it is a good idea to try to look at only one aspect of the paper at a time. This guideline suggests methods for analyzing a paper's development. When we refer to development in writing, we are talking about the depth of detail, explanation, or argument in the paper.

Explanation of Development

In some writing, such as in descriptions or narratives, development is achieved by recording specific details about appearance, sound, and other sensations. In other kinds of writing, development is achieved by supplying the reader with examples or by giving deeper explanations. Instead of moving from one generalization to another, you should often stop to clarify what you mean. When you are writing about other peoples' texts, you usually develop your own generalizations by quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing the texts you are referring to.

Guidelines for Analyzing Development

Normally this kind of peer critique works best if you exchange papers with a partner and work silently by writing a response based on the following guidelines. When both of you have finished writing a response, you can go over your responses with each other.

1. Go to a paragraph that looks fairly long. Read it carefully. On your comment sheet, write "Sentence One." After that title write down whether you think it is a generalization or a specific example or explanation. Do the same for all the sentences in the paragraph.
2. Now go back through the whole paper. Underline all of the sentences that are generalizations rather than explanations, examples, or quotations. (A poorly developed essay will appear to be nearly completely underlined: there will not be any material which develops the ideas.)
3. If the paper is a description or a narrative, use a highlighter to mark words, phrases, or sentences which give sense details. Generally speaking, the more of these there are the better, although it is possible to over develop a text.
4. If the paper is one which uses quotations and paraphrases, use a highlighter to mark quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. (Normally a balanced paper will have paragraphs that begin with generalizations that lead into the quotation. Following the quotation, we would expect to see more discussion of it, but at a more specific level than the generalizations which preceded it.)
5. Write a note to the writer explaining your experience as someone who read the text looking for development. Were the ideas clearly stated? Did the writer go on to explain his or her generalizations? Does the paper contain sufficient details, examples, and other development material to make the writer's ideas clear? Tell the writer if the paper seemed superficial or deep. If it seemed deep, what gave you that impression? (Cite a couple examples.) If it seemed superficial, what does the writer need to do to give it more substance?

Adapted from Northern Illinois University's WAC resource page.