Sample Peer Workshop Feedback

Introduction: Below I have compiled some examples of workshop feedback provided by English 104 students for peer group workshops. As you read through these examples, you'll notice a few things. First, different reviewers have different styles; there is no template for writing your feedback, so focus on the issues of the writing that you have something to say about, and as you get to know writers (once you work with them multiple times), your responses might start to take a more friendly tone. Second, the strongest advice points to specific passages or ideas in the essay drafts that can be improved; don't be too general and make comments that seem to apply to the whole essay. Often, you will notice that the responding peer identifies both his/her likes and dislikes about the essay. Your job does not require you to only look for what's “wrong” with the draft; instead, the writer can benefit from learning what s/he is doing “right” in the writing.

Example #1:
Dear T-----:

You introduce your topic right away which I think is good because I immediately know what I'll be reading about. In the second paragraph, you include that the average teen consumes (side note: I like how you used the word “consumes”) six to eight hours of TV a day. Is there any way you can source that to make it more credible? Also, within three consecutive paragraphs in your intro you said the word “teenager” three times and two of those three times, “teenager” started the sentence. Could you replace “teenager” with “young adult” or “adolescent”? Or, could you vary the sentence structures enough to avoid sounding repetitive?

I like the terms you used in paragraph seven for consumers (pawns) in the corporate (giants’) “game.” It was funny, but yet oh-so-true. Sentence three of this paragraph doesn’t really make any sense. I think you just left out a word somewhere between “…in sexy positions and barley and clothing…” I think you meant “…in sexy positions and in barely any clothing…” If not, perhaps you could clarify your meaning in that section. Although, wearing grains could be fashionable this summer… Later on in that paragraph you made the hasty generalization that “every” American formed the linkage you found to be only 70% accurate, so really, only most of Americans did.

Yay! I’m so glad you qualify your findings in paragraph nine. That makes me happy. But make sure you don’t “talk” to your reader (like in your first sentence of this paragraph) -- you lose professionalism. Also, you have three quote marks in this paragraph -- better double check ‘em.

Just a couple more little things: Could you source paragraph ten? I love your first sentence in paragraph 11. Don’t say “you” in paragraph 11 -- I know I’m not a parent, so it almost feels like you’re making assumptions about your readers. And that’s it. It a very good essay that’s easy to read and understand filled with a lot of knowledge on the subject. Grrrrreat job and gooood luck with your revisions!

Example #2: (By the same reviewer as sample #1)
Dear R-----:

I really like the way you started your essay. It was a very unique way of introducing your topic because it takes the reader into the mind of someone interested in these pro-ana sites. In the second paragraph you refer to someone (singular) then later you refer to they (plural). Make sure you keeping writing in the singular or in the plural tense to be consistent.

There are a couple spots that are a little wordy. With phrases such as “This all seems a little hasty…” (paragraph two) and “pretty much” (paragraph three), it’s better just to cut them out. For example, for the sentence in paragraph two, you could just say “But some of us are…” This change will make the writing seem less choppy.

You made a few grammatical/punctuation errors, but I won’t bother to write them out for you-- I’ll just go over them in our group and they are marked on your essay.
I think right now you intend to make paragraph five and nine into block quotations that I think will work just fine. Just remember to adequately lead into and transition out of the long quotations, so that they're complementing what you write rather than speaking for you.

In paragraph seven you wrote “When something as serious as an eating disorder in such a normal tone, like ‘Here, wear these cool bracelets to show your support!’ or ‘We are here for you.’ Here is what you can do to cut those calories even more next time [this paragraph has been edited].” But you never said what happens when this happens. You just stopped in the middle of it.

I love your fourth sentence paragraph nine. It summed the problem up very well. The whole paper showed how dangerous these websites are and I look forward to reading more if it!

Example #3:

M----,

You have a very good opening paragraph. It makes the reader think about what you are talking about because of its ability to make the reader feel a certain way and then completely change the situation on them. Toward the beginning of your paper you talk about how people often relate the word “gay” as if it were a disease. Maybe here you could tie in how people often use it as a common word often displaying negative connotation toward others? I think that would relate to most of your readers, especially the younger crowd who usually has a problem with gays and lesbians.

I thought it was nice how you added famous leaders into your paper, but can you try and build these sections some more to convince your readers? I got the impression that you just needed to add them in because you didn't really back them up with aspects form your argument. Right after that, in your paragraph about God, you are sure to drawl some attention with this one. You are making a good argument, but at the same time that Bible, according to many interpretations, says there should be no gay and lesbian marriages. Maybe people look at it as the work of the devil and not God. This is where you need to back your argument up more because here it will be easy to poke holes into your argument. Maybe instead go more for how people use the Bible in a way to discriminate.

Your paragraph about the countries is very interesting. But I did want to know more about the father. Did people see what he did as a good thing? I also think building on this would be very helpful to your paper. Make us feel for her and her side of the story, and maybe use a connection to your life. I know you have the Cumberland story but try to make it personal. Your ending is good, but I think you could add something about gay and lesbian rights and how people are pushing to help them out more. I also think you could add something about actual gay and lesbian marriage laws in your paragraph about our country and what it was founded on.

Example #4:

Hey K------------,

As usual, your essay rocked. Your story about the car accident and your rehabilitation was very jaw dropping. It was cool to see you “re-learn” yourself, but as who you actually are and not a product of something you just were around for years. I liked your introduction, especially your use of the Biblical verses and how you reacted to them when first hearing them. Your essay flowed well, and you finished strong with your conclusion.

Just some things: Would it help to tie in your concluding paragraph throughout the essay? You wrap it up nicely, but I think it could be stronger if you stretch that throughout. I thought it was a little choppy in a few places. Between para. 4-5, and between para. 3-4 on the second page could use a little transition there to make it flow better.

The last sentence of your second para. on the second page, “I was completely shocked...” I felt like it was a bit rushed. Could you expand on that feeling a little more? You’re telling me something important here, so I think it would help if you could slow down and show it to me. Also, in your last para. you describe how you felt like it was God’s fault for what happened, but you found yourself through that. Could you express more emotion on that topic? I think it would benefit your ending a lot. Everything else involves little things and I was go over them with you in class tomorrow. Well done!
Example #5:

S-----, Good job with this piece. It's interesting to read so far!

In the introduction paragraph, you say that the beauty of West Virginia often captures people's attention on any drive. Perhaps you could describe the beauty of your state. You could say something about the forests and use descriptive vocabulary so that you could paint a picture in the reader's mind of just how beautiful your state may be. Right now you're telling me it's beautiful, so I have to take your word for it; can you show me that it's beautiful?

I really like how you have a lot of personal experience with this issue. It affected you personally, and from your piece, you relate your personal experience really well with the piece.

On page 3, at the end, you say that your town is still trying to repair the damage from the flood. Perhaps you could elaborate more on the damage that was done to your town. While the reader understands that effect of the flood was devastating, there isn't a clear picture as to how bad the damage was. Put a lot of detail and imagery here so you can make the reader feel sympathy.

You definitely need more sources for this paper. You seem like you use Saville a lot, and you need a few others. Maybe you could use something from the *Community, Responsibility and Citizenship* book that we use in class. Tomorrow during workshop, we can talk about some sources that might work well for you.

Good job transitioning between paragraphs also. I didn't find much of a gap; it fit together pretty well.

If you just work on finishing the piece, and come up with more sources, more detail, and maybe instead of focusing on just how it affects your town, you could focus on the entire state, then maybe you could reach the necessary 10 page length. 5 pages already seems drawn out, or maybe this is just me, I don't know.

Really good job on the piece though!

Example #6:

Hey B------,

I really liked your opening sentence; it forces the reader to think about your topic. I thought your opening was good; however, I thought it would be stronger if you added an image, for example in the intro you could use an image of what the world will look like if we continue to use gas for energy. Then in your conclusion you could refer back to that unappealing image, and then create a new friendlier image of what the world would look like if we start to use hydrogen instead. I also think that throughout your paper you should continue to mention the effects both good and bad to remind the people what will happen to them and their atmosphere.

I also added a few spots where sources would really strengthen your argument. There is a study by Solomon Asch called the “lines study” and it shows how people will follow if the majority believes the same thing. When I was reading your paper I immediately thought of this study, I think it will really help if you included it in your second paragraph. There are also a few other spots I pointed out to place quotes, and I tried to add in what you should look for, so I hope that helps a little bit. When I was looking for sources I used the academic search premiere on the library's website.

Another thing I found that I liked was the comparison between the hybrid car and the bus system, I thought it really made the point you were trying to get across. I liked your use of Durning too, because it fits perfectly with your topic!

In class Jeff was saying how it was good to include the other side's opinion, so maybe towards the beginning of the paper you could add in some reasons why people like gas fueled cars, then explain why the hybrid is better or at least comparable.

Finally, you mentioned something about the organization and flow. I thought the organization was good, and to help it flow all you need is transitions into each new paragraph or idea.

Overall I enjoyed reading your paper, it kept my attention and I thought it was nicely written. After you add in the rest of your information I think you will have a very good paper!!
Example #7:
D----,

I liked your essay- I thought you brought some light on this shocking issue. Your opening paragraph is strong. I thought the thought process of one trying to rationalize these decisions was a skillful move.

Would it help to add some good sources throughout your essay? For example, in paragraph two you discuss the idea of achieving the perfect body. Would it help to add a source there talking about the pressures of today’s society on the people to have that kind of body? Again, in the next paragraph, you could use an interview, or some kind of source that refers to someone who has been through this. In your second paragraph could you expand a little more on the pro-anorexia websites? I’m not sure I understand fully what they are or how prominent they are.

On the third page how do you know that the people visiting these sites religiously “don’t want a way out”? It makes sense to me, but would it help to add a source there? Your next paragraphs add good information and you did a good job to tie in sources here. The paragraph that begins on page five (“You can choose to binge and purge...”) provides chilling information that benefits your argument. Your block quote, two paragraphs down, should be double indented. Try to lead into it more.

Example #8:
Advice to N-------:
The opening paragraph of your essay has extreme detail and depth. The descriptions feel as if one is actually driving through the mountains of Kentucky. This is a very strong paragraph.

I think that a greater connection could be made if there is some small dialogue, especially when you are describing your childhood. This could help the reader grasp what is being explained a little better. Also, I think that more detail could be added when describing the effects of these materials on the land. When these materials sit in the land, chemicals seep from them and move into the land which affects the water in that specific region. Therefore, you could talk about the environmental hazards of illegal dumping on top of the aesthetic effects by appealing to logic.

I like that you stressed that not only does polluting hurt violators, but more importantly it hurts the environment. The value of the land far exceeds any fine placed on these polluters.

There could possibly be a greater connection made with this piece if you maybe added a few examples of violators. Maybe find a company or two that has violated this law and that have been known for not caring much for the environment. This may help the reader get “into” the writing. I think this is a very strong piece of writing and here are a few suggestions.

Example #9:
Advice to C-------:
Over-packaging is a major problem. I think it is good that you have first hand experience with this topic and that you explain that you worked in a plant that regularly over-packaged text books. This helps the reader make a better connection with the essay. It is shown early on that this is a topic that you have thought about before writing, and this topic has had somewhat of effects and repercussions in your job and everyday life.

I think if you put more emphasis on the environment by explaining the consequences of over-packaging to possibly make a better connection. How is the environment endangered by this?

There are a few questions that you might want to consider during revision: Is over-packaging more expensive? What are the specific materials used during packaging? Are these materials completely harmful? Are some biodegradable?

The example with Dannon was, in my opinion, a good connection with the article. I think if you added another example company as well as Dannon to increase some depth into this piece of writing. Information like this helps the reader want to know more because they can relate to some of their everyday situations and because they are familiar with companies like Dannon. I think this writing has great potential and I hope my suggestions here are helpful. Good luck with your revisions.