For a project you’re currently revising, what kind of feedback have you received so far?
(Zoom folks: Answer in the chat!)

A. Instructor Comments
B. Peer Feedback
C. Writing Center
D. None so far!
Implementing Feedback & Revision Strategies

A Writing Guide Presentation

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Maria Baker
CK Kirch
What’s on the menu?

1. Interpreting Feedback
2. Revision Strategies
Interpreting Feedback
**COMMENT**  ➔  **REVISION??**

- “Needs restructuring”  ➔  I guess I’ll change the structure? Although I have no idea what the new one will be…
- “Great observation”  ➔  Awesome, I won’t change anything about this.
- “Consider rewording”  ➔  I’ll grab my thesaurus... Not sure what words will be better, though.
- “Nice summary but needs analysis”  ➔  Dang, I thought I was doing analysis! What do I do now??
- “Vague”  ➔  Well, so is this comment!
**Types of Reader Feedback**

**Evaluative:**
Reader says whether or not they liked it
- “Good/Bad”
- “I liked it/I didn’t like it”

**Prescriptive:**
Reader suggests changes for the writer to make
- “Restructure your essay”
- “Expand on this”

**Descriptive:**
Reader describes their experience of the piece
- “I was confused here”
- “This surprised me”
The problem with feedback:

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**Descriptive:**
Reader describes their experience of the piece
- “I was confused here”
- “This surprised me”

- Doesn’t help us figure out what to revise (because we don’t know their criteria, nor do we know how they understand our project!)
- Doesn’t take into account our intended project (so the suggestions might not actually make sense for what we’re trying to do!)
- Useful! We can compare their experience with our intentions to determine how to revise (but the problem is we don’t always get this kind of feedback!)
The problem with feedback:
We can’t always control what kind of feedback we receive

Soliciting descriptive feedback: ask about the reader’s experience – questions whose answers will help you make revision decisions, e.g.:

- *Is my argument clear?* → “Can you summarize my argument?”
- *Is there information missing?* → “Were there any places you got confused while reading?”
- *Do I need to restructure?* → “What did you see as the logical connection between these ideas?”

But sometimes we can’t control what kind of feedback we receive!
- Instructor comments
- Some peer review assignments

How do I turn evaluative/prescriptive feedback into descriptive feedback?
What experience did this reader have that led them to make this comment?
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>POSSIBLE READER EXPERIENCE</th>
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• The reader probably didn’t understand the logical connection between my ideas.

• I pointed out something the reader might not have realized before.

• How the reader understood this sentence may not have matched their expectations for what I was going to say here.

• My close-reading came across to this reader as summary rather than analysis.

• The reader may not be certain how to apply this idea to the specific context here.

→ How can I make connections clearer? (Change order? Add missing pieces? Both?)

→ Am I using this surprising moment in the most advantageous way?

→ What did they think I was trying to say? Why did they think that? (Issue with wording or with setting expectations?)

→ How can I bring out my analysis more so it’s clear I’m saying something new?

→ How can I ensure my explanations draw clear connections between general ideas and this specific context?
Giving Yourself Feedback
(to develop/choose Revision Strategies)
PRIORITIZING YOUR REVISIONS: HOCs and LOCs

HOC: Higher Order Concerns

*Global issues* - issues that impede a reader’s understanding of a text. *Structure; argument*

Stage of intervention: *Early and middle stages of drafting.*

Ask: Can you say back my main ideas?

LOC: Lower Order Concerns

*Local errors* - errors that do not impede a reader’s understanding of a text. *Sentence Level Concerns*

Stage of intervention: *Late stage of drafting/revising.*

Ask: Are there moments in my text you notice/ minor errors you can easily ignore while reading?
We all (hopefully) know what outlining is.

Reverse outlining is a revision strategy that takes stock of the draft AFTER you’ve have created it—which may or may not have turned out like the original outline you made.

There are many ways to reverse outline. In the second half of this workshop, we’ll focus on two methods: one small and one big.
Creating a *Methodology Paragraph* offers a writer the opportunity to give to *themselves* a sense of the structure and chain of reasoning of their work. (It’s a way of saying back your ideas to yourself.)

It is a great method for locating HOCs and also a first self-reflection on: how you’ve done what you’ve done.
Writing a methodology paragraph is a strategy borrowed from papers that describe scientific experiments.

*Possible model language:*

In order to answer my research question/arrive at my claim that _____ I will begin by ___ . Then I will proceed by introducing ____, after which I move on to ____ and ____ (etc.)
In order to explain how montages of training sequences in *Rocky* films illustrate and contribute to expectations of unrealistic self-reliance in American society, I’ll begin describing the Rocky/boxing films and their protagonist. Then I will focus on the presence of training montages and show their main elements and their placement in the story structure of each film. I will underline how the montages work cinematically, and how their manipulation of time distorts the meaning of effort. Then I will show that this compression of time omits other people’s contributions to the hero’s journey altogether and positions Rocky as a lone hero who works without institutional support. I will strengthen this last point by focusing on Rocky’s opponent’s training-footage that audiences see, and how it focuses on government sponsored state-of-the art facilities that are shown as clinical and less desirable than Rocky’s home-spun equipment. From there I will focus on the triumph in the final battle, which aesthetically contradicts the montage by elongating time and therefore heightens the individual’s/Rocky’s moment of glory and positions him as the quintessential, self-made American hero.
METHODOLOGY PARAGRAPH

POST-EXERCISE, ask yourself the following questions:

- Overall, was this challenging?
- Which sections of your essay did you cover effortlessly?
- Which sections were difficult to capture?
- If you notice **you forgot** to include a section, why do you think you forgot it? How is that section connected to your claim and its surrounding sections?
- If you notice that **you have reordered** your sections in the methodology paragraph, why do you think that is? How does the order of your methodology paragraph deviate from the structure of your current draft? Which order captures your chain of reasoning best?
SAYS / DOES

Says/Does offers a writer the opportunity to give to *themselves* the kind of **descriptive feedback** we hope to get from our readers.

It is also & a great method for finding HOCs...

& for resisting the lure of dealing with LOCs first.
SAYS/DOES

Says/Does is a simple, task-oriented exercise which asks you to reflect on the work your current draft performs.

This strategy can be employed by annotating directly on a printed copy of your draft.

In the left-hand margin, write concisely the main ideas delivered by each paragraph.

In the right-hand margin, track what the paragraph is doing. In other words: how would a teacher of writing describe the moves each paragraphs makes?

...Of course, a writer may prefer to write digitally, creating headings or digital comments for each paragraph with the sub-points “says” then “does”...
We make this distinction between what a text says and what it does because writers need to cultivate metacognitive awareness of the choices they’ve made to construct a text.

Metacognition is the ability to step outside the execution of a task and reflect not on the product of the task but on the very execution itself—how you chose to create that product.
Questions to Pose as You Read

To arrive at what you are “saying”, you might ask the following questions:

● How would a reader summarize my ideas here?

● What information could a reader extract in the paragraph?

● What has a reader learned about the topic, question or object of study?

● What novel ideas might a reader think now—something they wouldn’t otherwise think if they hadn’t read my draft?

To arrive at what you are “doing”, you might ask the following questions:

● What objective from my prompt am I fulfilling in this moment?

● Where can I detect that my draft performs the conventions of the genre I’m writing in?

● How would I name and describe the role this sentence plays in my paragraph?

● What strategies did I use to achieve my goal?

● What choices did I make to best express what I wanted to say?
Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature’s first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf’s a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

I wrote 1 stanza.
I wrote 8 lines.
I end-stopped all my lines.
Robert Frost

Nothing Gold Can Stay

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But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

I wrote a poem.

I used an AA BB CC DD rhyme scheme —

the simplicity
of which is in
the tension w/ the intensity
of my message.

I wrote a poem.

I wrote a poem.
Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature’s first green is gold,
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Her early leaf’s a flower;
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Then leaf subsides to leaf.
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So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

I repeated the word “gold” at the end—
its a devastating
devastating
devastating
devastating
devastating

I wrote a poem.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signposting</th>
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<th>Topic Sentences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Introducing a Source</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Narrating an Exhibit</td>
<td>Offering a Key Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Restating</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Asking the Next, Richer Question</td>
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<td>Making a Sub-Claim</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Explaining a Warrant</td>
<td>Pairing Abstraction with Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using an Analogy</td>
<td>Close Reading</td>
<td>Inserting Myself into the Text</td>
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Ultimately, we identify what we are doing to help us evaluate the effectiveness of what we are saying.

Always ask:

*do the choices I’ve made here support and best reflect my purpose?*

Thinking only about what you express or only about how you express it won’t help us. But by observing our texts at both levels (what we communicate and how we communicate it)---

we can realize places to revise.
LOC: Sentence Level Revisions

- Read your draft aloud
- Have someone else read your draft aloud
- Read for redundancies
- Revise for concision
Recap:

- Getting reader feedback is super important for the revision process!
- Some kinds of feedback are more useful than others (descriptive is best!) but we can't always control what kind of feedback we get.
- What experience did the reader have that led them to make this comment?
- While reader feedback is important, you can also be your own reader!
- Reverse outlining is a great way to put yourself in the position of a reader to give yourself feedback (methodology paragraph or says/does exercise!)
Some material based on a previous workshop given by Charlee Dyroff and Christina McCausland: Revision: Clarity & Style


Brain w/ a Pencil’s wardrobe courtesy Christian Dior

“Nothing Gold Can Stay” was not written by Brain w/ a Pencil; it is a poem by Robert Frost