

How to Use the Rubric

“Helpful” peer review comments are really worth 35 points? Isn’t “helpful” kind of subjective?

One of the skills I’m looking for you to learn here is how to **navigate a professional writing situation with grace and humility**. There will be many times after graduation where you’ll have to write (and critique other’s writing.) The purpose of the writing critique may be to point out the places where the writing is “off-brand” or “off-message” if you are working in politics or marketing. The purpose of the critique may be to make a piece of writing clearer to a potential audience (if you are writing a scientific report that must be translated for a technical writer at your company.)

Learning to critique in a professional way is a skill that can—literally—save you from being fired. No one wants to work with someone who has no people skills.

If you’re stuck, you can create a kind of “sandwich”:

1. Something that’s going well.
2. Something that could be improved.
3. Suggestion for how to improve. The suggestion could be based on class concepts, class readings, or lecture.

If you’re really stuck, you should try to **imagine what you would feel like if you were in your partner’s shoes**. Maybe they stayed up until 3 am writing because they got off work at midnight. Maybe they’re juggling this class with caring for a sick grandparent.

In a subtle way, I’m also evaluating your knowledge of writing for an audience with this requirement. As we know, **writing changes based on rhetorical situation**: who the writer is, who the writer is writing to, and what he/she is writing.

Why is 15 points of the grade determined by how many comments we make? What if we make fewer comments, but they’re really substantial and writer-centric?

I chose to put a quantitative value to the comments in order to stave off questions from students. Also, I wanted to make sure that each paper was getting a thorough read, and that peer review was not a waste of time. The more comments you write on your partner’s paper, the easier it will be to jog your memory when you talk to your partner about his/her paper in class.