CI Guidelines for Peer Review

Communication skills only improve when you hear from your audience how well you accomplished your communication goals. As you write and read peer reviews, you have an opportunity to learn how you come across to others. In the best scenarios, you may also see new potential in your project that you could not have thought of on your own. You may also discover limitations that help you adjust the project scope.

**Balance positive feedback with constructive criticism:** Every post will have strengths and places where the thinking or the writing could improve. Make sure to address both in your review. A respectful tone is always appreciated.

**Describe your responses:** How did you react when you read this? Were you excited by the topic? Did you think the writer may have to do a lot of work to approach the topic in a fresh way? Could you follow the train of thought, or did the writer drift a bit from the stated focus? Does the project make sense to you, or do you need more information? Specify the information you need.

**Ask questions:** What are some of the assumptions the writer makes? How valid is the direction of the project? If you are confused at any point, ask the writer what she meant by the phrase that confused you. Do you see any leaps in logic or organization?

**Offer suggestions:** Keep in mind that it’s not your job to write the post or do the project yourself. It may be helpful, however, for writers to hear specific suggestions about how their writing or thinking could be improved.

**Refer back to the assignment sheet:** Did the post accomplish the goals set out in the assignment sheet? Is the post as formal or informal as specified? If not, what do you as an audience member need to make the reading experience more valuable?

With these principles in mind, respond to your peers thoughtfully and carefully. Take their posts and yours seriously. If everyone puts in the effort, peer reviews can be the most valuable, fun part of the CI curriculum. Despite our best efforts, however, some criticism can be difficult to take. If you find yourself frustrated with your review, give yourself some time to come back to it and see if any points have merit.