UNLV *Writing Center*
Strategies for Workshopping

General Guidelines for Workshopping Papers

- Introduce yourselves to one another.

- Go around and summarize your project in one or two sentences.

- Taking turns, each author reads the most troublesome section of their essay, aloud, to the group. Yes, we know you're proud of the stronger parts and want to have them admired, but that would waste time.

- Authors, before you read the section, let your group members know the purpose of the section so the group can tell you if you've achieved your purpose. For instance, if the section is a lit review, then the purpose is to provide an overview of how others have approached the issue or topic. Other purposes?

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  - o To describe
  - o To provide evidence
  - o To analyze

  - o To synthesize
  - o To compare
  - o To contrast

  Note that each of these words (and there are many more) is a verb and expresses an activity. Each of your paragraphs and sections should be active in this way, should be doing something to move your claims, argument, or research forward. Yes, providing background or contextualizing the topic is active in this way.

- Before each author reads, they tell the group what their major concerns are. If you are concerned that the organization makes your argument or explanation difficult to follow, tell the group that before beginning to read. If you are a multilingual writer who would like some help with finding just the right vocabulary for a section, tell the group that. And don't be afraid to interrupt yourself to point to a particular passage and ask for the group's help with it.

- As each author reads, everyone else takes notes so they can point out inconsistencies, incongruities, organization issues, and gaps in the reasoning, descriptions, or explanations.

- Authors, DO NOT defend the choices you've already made. It's a waste of time. Since you are the author, you can decide not to take suggestions you think will not improve your writing, so there's no need to explain yourself now—unless you always need to be right, and this isn't the place for that.

- Authors, make sure you understand what the group saw as problematic about your writing before moving on to the next author. In other words, ask questions if the suggestions or feedback are unclear to you.

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- Commenters, offer constructive feedback that focuses on the writing and the thinking, not on the author. It's better to couch your feedback in terms of your reaction to the writing rather than in terms of the writer. For example, "I couldn't follow the part where you discuss how you'll measure … It seems to me a step is missing," rather than "You really left a lot out in the section where you discuss…You make no sense."

- Raise your hand if your group is having an issue. We'll be wandering around and eavesdropping. Maybe even butting in if we think we can help.

- After you've gone around and everyone has had a turn, revise immediately. If no one has anything to revise, do it again. If no one has anything to revise, you should probably raise your hand because that's so unlikely it may indicate your group needs a little professional guidance.

- Do NOT concern yourselves with grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Revision will change these needs, so it's a waste of time to look at these things at this point in the process—unless everything else is crystal clear.

- Keep an eye on the clock so everyone's work gets some workshopping.

- Don't forget to make an appointment to workshop with a consultant in the Writing Center. 702.895.3908.

WORKSHOP PROCESS

1. Read
2. Comment
3. Question
4. Revise

PRIMARY CONCERNS

1. **Structure**: Easy to follow?
2. **Organization**: Logical? : Is everything there?
3. **Explanations/descriptions**: Gaps?
4. **Reasoning**: Clear and complete?

UNLV *Writing Center*

Mondays-Fridays, 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM
Sundays, NOON until 6:00 PM

Call 702.895.3908 or stop in CDC-301 for an appointment.

Walk-Ins and Quick Questions often available.