

Open Knowledge for a Sustainable Future: Research, Ethics, and Wikipedia

Week 8 — Peer review: doing it

Francis Bond (**Academic**) Pavel Bednařík (Wiki)

Palacký University Olomouc | Wikimedia ČR

1 Peer Review & Revision in Practice

From theory to practice

- Peer review, reproducibility, and citation ethics all serve one purpose: maintaining credibility
- Today we practise this on a smaller scale:
 - ▶ Read your partner's paper carefully
 - ▶ Give specific, constructive, respectful feedback
 - ▶ Remember: your review contributes to their improvement — and your own understanding of good writing

Why revision matters (again)

- Good writing is *rewriting*: clarity, structure, and claims improve with feedback
- Revision is not cosmetic editing; it is **rethinking** your argument and evidence
- Peer review helps you see what your reader actually understands
- Goal today: find **actionable changes** you can complete before final submission

What peer review is (and isn't)

- A reader's report on **clarity, evidence, logic, and structure**
 - Specific, constructive, and respectful; focused on **the writing**, not the writer
 - Not copyediting every comma; not “gotcha”
- ⇒ Prioritise the few changes with the biggest impact

How to give useful feedback

- Be **specific**: point to a sentence/paragraph and say what is unclear and why
- Be **diagnostic**: name the issue (claim lacks evidence; paragraph lacks topic sentence)
- Be **actionable**: propose a next step (add a source; move paragraph; define a term)
- Balance: 1–2 strengths + 1–2 high-value improvements

How to respond to reviews

- **Read carefully:** understand what the reviewer is actually asking — not what you fear they mean
- **Respond to everything:** address each comment, even if briefly (“We have revised X as suggested” or “We respectfully disagree because Y”)
- **Be specific in your response:** quote the comment, then explain exactly what you changed (with page/line numbers)
- **Don’t be defensive:** assume good intent; reviewers are trying to improve your work
- **Push back professionally:** if you disagree, explain why with evidence — editors respect reasoned disagreement
- **Thank your reviewers:** they volunteered their time

Reviewer comment decoder

What reviewers write

“The motivation is unclear”

“This needs more context”

“The contribution is incremental”

“Consider reorganising”

“Minor revisions needed”

“Major revisions needed”

“This is interesting but...”

“The authors may wish to consider...”

What they often mean

Your introduction doesn't explain why anyone should care

You assumed background knowledge I don't have

I don't see what's new here

I got lost; the structure doesn't work

Fix these specific things and you're done

Good potential, but significant work required

Brace yourself

You really should do this

Today's workflow (40 min)

- 1 Swap drafts and read silently (8–10 min)
- 2 Complete the peer review form (10–15 min)
- 3 Discuss feedback with your partner (5–10 min)
- 4 Each writer drafts a **revision plan** (5 min): top 3 changes

Name your review. This is non-blind, collegial feedback.

1) Content & Argument

- What is the main thesis / research question?
- Is the argument clear and sustained throughout?
- What claims need more evidence or better support?

2) Structure & Clarity

- Are abstract, introduction, body, conclusion present and effective?
- Does the paper flow logically? Are paragraphs coherent?

Peer review form (2/2)

3) Use of Sources

- At least 5 reliable sources?
- Are sources integrated and evaluated (not just dropped in)?
- Are citations/references consistent (APA 7)?

4) Language & Style

- Tone appropriate for an academic audience?
- Any recurring grammar/style issues affecting clarity?

5) Suggestions for Improvement

- Strongest part of the paper:
- One concrete change before final submission:

6) Overall Assessment — Perfect / Minor Revision / Major Revision / Reject

Revision memo

This should be around 1 page per review, due with the revised draft.

- **What you changed** (structure, argument, evidence, style) and why
- **How peer feedback helped** (cite specific comments)
- **What you did not change** (and why), if applicable
- **Remaining questions** or risks you want the instructor to note

Treat the memo as a guided tour of your revisions.

Writer's pre-submission checklist (final paper)

- Thesis is specific and arguable; each section advances it
- Every claim with evidence; sources are credible and cited correctly
- Paragraphs have clear topic sentences; transitions guide the reader
- Figures/tables (if any) are labeled and discussed in text
- Title, abstract, and conclusion match the actual contribution

Peer review in the classroom

- The same principles that guide journals can strengthen student writing:
 - ▶ **Critical reading:** noticing logic, evidence, and structure in someone else's paper sharpens your own awareness
 - ▶ **Audience awareness:** seeing how readers interpret your draft teaches you what is clear—or not
 - ▶ **Constructive feedback:** learning to explain why something works or fails builds editorial skill
 - ▶ **Collaboration:** mutual review builds a community of practice, not competition
- Effective peer review is generous but honest:
 - ▶ Praise what works; suggest specific improvements
 - ▶ Think of yourself as a temporary editor, helping the author achieve their intention

Peer review trains both empathy and precision—the two skills every writer needs.

Acknowledgements

- I have had over 200 papers reviewed (thanks reviewers!)
- I have peer reviewed over 2,000 conference papers, 100 journal papers, 10 PhDs, 2 Habilitations, and many grants
- **GPT-4o** in ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) was used to format the references, and generate a first draft of the slides
- **Claude Opus 5** (Anthropic, 2026) was used to check the slides: to resolve every DOI against Crossref, fetch every URL, and compare each quotation with its original. The prompt was of the form

Verify every claim, DOI, URL and quotation against a real source. Where you cannot verify something, say so rather than guessing --- never invent a reference.

Each correction names the source it was checked against. Responsibility for what remains is mine.

References I

Anthropic. (2026). *Claude Opus 5 (Sep 20, 2026 version)* (Large language model).

Retrieved September 20, 2026, from <https://claude.ai/>

OpenAI. (2025). *ChatGPT (Mar 14, 2025 version)* (Large language model). Retrieved

October 14, 2025, from <https://chat.openai.com/>