

18.310C Peer review guidelines

Spring 2009

The purpose of writing a peer review is for you to help your classmate to improve his/her paper. To write a review that is helpful, think about what sorts of comments would be most helpful to you as you revise your paper—write similarly helpful comments for your peer.

You should devote at least an hour to reading and commenting on your peer's paper. Consider the following questions:

1. Is the paper clear?

The assigned audience is students in 310C, so because you are a student in 310C, the author should write clearly enough for the paper to make sense to you. Point out anything that you find to be confusing or unclear. Try to point out precisely what is causing the confusion so the author can determine how best to clarify the text.

2. Is the paper consistent and correct?

If you aren't comfortable stating that something is incorrect, you could word your comment as a question ("Why is...?") or as a confusion ("I don't understand why...").

3. Are new topics and ideas introduced with sufficient explanation?

New topics and ideas should be connected to ideas that are familiar to the audience (for example, from class or from an earlier part of the paper). Also, the reason for introducing the new topic or idea should be clear.

4. Are topics presented in a logical order?

This question applies to all levels of the paper. For example, sections should be presented in a logical order, and the steps within a proof should be presented in a logical order.

5. Does the paper achieve an appropriate balance of conciseness and explanation?

Point out places where the text is too wordy or too concise.

6. Is the paper proofread for grammar, spelling, etc?

Be sure to give some honest comments about what is done well in the paper as well suggestions for improving the paper.

Grading

Your peer review will be graded on a scale of 10 as follows:

- 10 A thorough review that points out confusing parts of the paper and includes helpful suggestions (e.g., suggesting restructuring, how to explain more clearly, helpful figures...) and / or probing questions (e.g., Is this lemma really necessary? Could you prove this theorem more elegantly by...?). Rationales for comments are clearly explained.
- 7 A less thorough review with some helpful comments.
- 4 Few helpful comments.
- 0 Failed to submit a peer review.