EFFECTIVE PEER REVIEW

Below are several examples of dialogue between a reviewer (Alice) and author (Bob). Consider what might be effective or ineffective about how they interact.

Example #1

ALICE: Well everything looked pretty good. It seems like you did all the math right and I can read it and stuff.

BOB: Oh, thanks. So, were there any parts that needed some work?

ALICE: I don't know. There were a few parts where maybe you could have used some different words, but I understood all of it. There was guiding text and everything.

BOB: Cool — so I shouldn't change anything?

ALICE: Yeah. I think it's fine.

Example #2

ALICE: Gosh, where to start? I guess there are some proofs, but just look at this! Your introduction: hardly makes sense. You state Theorem 1 without defining some of its terms. There's no indication of why you're introducing the sets A and B at the start of the proof. And you say you're proving by contrapositive but this is contradiction!

BOB: Oh, um... yeah, I guess I see what you're saying. So what about...

ALICE: No, that paragraph is horrible.

BOB: Hm. So, where do you think I should go from here?

ALICE: Well, starting over from scratch would be one idea...

Example #3

ALICE: This was pretty nice. There's strong motivation at the start and you state your claim in Theorem 1 very clearly. Now I did want to look at the start of your proof: you leap into a number of technical details without indicating why they're important. I thought you could ease into that with a short guiding paragraph.

BOB: What do you mean? I mean, it's clear what I'm doing, you have to introduce all those concepts, and I put the pieces together in the fourth paragraph. It's perfectly clear!

ALICE: Right — I figured it out eventually. I just think you'd place less of a burden on the reader by providing a roadmap of where things are headed.

BOB: But then won't I say everything twice? I want this to be concise and clean, not boring.

ALICE: OK... well, let's look at Theorem 2. In the proof, you argue for sequential compactness, but you never mention that Heine-Borel reduces the problem to that matter.

Date: October 14, 2011.

Bob: Oh come on! Everyone knows Heine-Borel!

Example #4

Alice: So I enjoyed this paper — I think you have a nice perspective on the problem. Things are well-motivated in the first paragraph, the proofs seem complete, and you make some nice use of guiding text.

Bob: OK, thanks.

Alice: I did feel that some of the information could have been organized better. For instance, your proof of Theorem 1 is only two paragraphs, but there are at least four distinct steps to your argument.

Bob: Uh-huh. So maybe it would be better if I split the ideas by paragraph?

Alice: Exactly. I think that would help a lot. And then I also wanted to draw your attention to the third-to-last paragraph. It's a little hard to tell how you use Ξ_{15} in the rest of the proof.

Bob: Well, I guess I thought it was important because of the rôle it plays in a related problem...

Alice: Right — I can sort of see that, but I wonder if you should cut that part since it's not really mentioned elsewhere in this paper.

Bob: Hmm. OK, well, I'll consider that when I make my revisions.