

Questions to Ask for Peer Review

Clarify thesis:

This is what I think your thesis is [say what you think it is]—is this what you mean?
Does your thesis tell me the reader what to expect in your paper?
Is the thesis specific enough?

Clarify content:

Does everything in the paper connect to the thesis in a way that is easy to understand?
If not, can the thesis be modified to include this additional information?
Or, is there something here that just doesn't belong to this paper?

Depth:

Are the ideas and claims in this paper new, perceptive, interesting? Does the paper exhibit critical thinking?
Are the ideas and claims well-supported and developed?
What exactly do you mean here, can you say more about the idea in this sentence (or sentences)?
Where is your citation for this?
Are these really your own words and not a quotation?
This seems vague, or general, or exaggerated, how can you say this more specifically, and stay closer to the content of your paper?
This seems to contradict something you wrote earlier in the paper—can you explain this?

Organization and Transitions:

Is this paper easy to follow and understand?
Does it present information in a way that flows?
Why does this paragraph follow the previous one?
Why does this information belong here? (Often, answering why will produce a better transitional sentence.)
Does each paragraph contain one main idea?

Word Choice:

Are there words that confuse, or seem out of place, or suggest a meaning other than intended?
Are there colloquialisms, jargon, or clichés that could be replaced with original, meaningful words?
This seems like a complicated way to say this—tell me what you mean (often this leads to clearer, more natural phrasing).
How else would you say this? Explain this to me...(oh, that makes sense, write that!).

Sentences:

Can you untangle supergroups of nouns? Is there a noun in your sentence that could instead become a more vivid verb? See example below.

Can you eliminate “ing” forms of verbs? Can you change passive voice to active? For example:

The Federalist’s **argument** that **destabilization** of government was the result of popular democracy was based on their **belief** in the **tendency** of self-interested groups toward **sacrificing** the common good for their narrow objectives.

The Federalists **argued** that popular democracy **destabilized** government, because they **believed** that self-interested groups **tended** to **sacrifice** the common good for their narrow objectives.

Does each sentence have an agent (a subject)? Who is doing what?

Does each sentence contain one idea? – look for run-on or incomplete sentences (phrases).

Are words repeated within one sentence, or within neighboring sentences? How can duplicates be eliminated?

Can you condense? Can two sentences be combined?

Look at punctuation—are commas, semicolons, dashes, hyphens used appropriately?