

*At the University of Rochester, we value our community of learners and encourage collaboration. At the same time, we expect students to maintain individual ownership over and responsibility for their work. These two principles can at times seem to conflict, making it difficult to know when working with others becomes an issue of academic dishonesty. In addition, the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate help is not perfectly clear and varies across cultures, instructional contexts, and professional contexts. Your first-year writing course provides an opportunity to learn how to engage in dialogues about your writing while maintaining your role as the paper's author. To help you make judgments related to this issue, the Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program offers these guidelines.*

### **Academic Integrity: Understanding How to Give and Receive Help when Writing Papers**

As writers seek out feedback from readers, it is important that they understand how to maintain authorial integrity. Such integrity allows writers to maintain pride in their work and to contribute positively to the academic community, a community whose past, present, and future depend on credible knowledge.

Developing as a writer is a process, one that is helped along by readers. Through making changes at all levels—essay, paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase, and word—writers discover and create their unique messages. Readers help writers learn how their messages are (or are not) received. This kind of interaction is essential to a writer's growth.

What are some appropriate ways to seek out feedback?

The guiding principle is to seek out readers, not those who would take on a writer's or editor's role for the paper. Here are some ways to do this.

1. Consult with a professional in the college.
  - a. Bring questions, ideas, and drafts to your course instructor.
  - b. Meet with a trained writing consultant /fellow (<http://writing.rochester.edu/help/index.html>).
  - c. Ask a question through the college's online tutoring service (<http://writing.rochester.edu/>).

Using the college's tutoring services gives both instructor and student a high degree of confidence that the student has authored the piece of writing.

2. Follow up in-class peer review with out-of-class peer review: using the peer-review format from your classroom interactions, conduct additional out-of-class peer review sessions with classmates.
3. Ask a friend to:
  - a. Use the classroom peer-review format to respond to your paper, or
  - b. Be a silent or questioning listener as you talk about your paper: in this scenario, your friend's job might be to ask you questions so that you can develop your own ideas, or to point out confusing areas so that you can revise your text to communicate ideas more effectively.

Please note: Friends can offer useful and appropriate feedback; however, when friends become over-involved in the writer's work, this puts both the writer and reader at risk for academic dishonesty charges.

When does getting help become an academic dishonesty issue?

Listed below are methods in the writing process that may put you at risk for academic dishonesty:

1. Having another make direct changes on your paper, whether by hand or through a medium such as track changes,
2. Having someone offer more than one or two sentence-level suggestions,
3. Having someone tell you what to write, or
4. Using a service that edits or revises papers.

Writers often take one or two suggestions from readers. As part of hearing how readers receive a writer's work, a writer might test a troublesome sentence, and a reader might suggest a way to make it less awkward. Doing this for a phrase or a sentence can be instructive, but remember that making a choice about grammar is making a choice about a text's meaning. It is especially important to recognize when the writer is unable to address changes on his or her own, as this may lead the reader to cross over into the role of the writer.

To summarize, the writer should maintain ownership throughout the revision process and be accountable for his or her writing choices throughout the paper. If ever in doubt, please consult with your course instructor.

The following table suggests productive interactions between writers and readers.

The Writer's Role	The Reader's Role
The writer can ask the reader to point out effective and/or problematic phrases and sentences. The writer can follow-up by asking the reader why he or she found something effective or problematic. Ultimately, the writer (not the reader) decides how to revise the phrases and sentences.	Underline particularly effective phrases and sentences. Circle problematic phrases and sentences.
Ask the reader to review your paper and offer feedback based on the peer review form from the class or instructor.	Read the paper and respond to peer review questions on the form provided by the writer. The reader might either talk through the review with the writer or write down responses on the peer review form (avoid writing on the paper; avoid making specific changes).
Read a paper aloud—perform the paper—so that you can better hear it from a reader's perspective.	Act as a silent audience for the writer.
Listen as the reader reads your paper to you; note when your reader stumbles or appears confused, and keep track of areas you might like to change.	Read the paper aloud—perform the paper—for the writer.
Explain your paper to the reader to flesh out your ideas.	Ask questions to better understand and to help the writer better understand and develop the paper's ideas.
Ask the reader a specific question about a part of the paper: "How well does my example demonstrate my point?" "How clear is this paragraph?" "How well has the paper addressed counterargument?"	Respond to the writer's specific question, but let the writer solve any problems that you identify.
Ask the reader for one or two suggestions about a problematic part of the paper.	Offer one or two suggestions about a small part of the paper.
Seek out different audiences for your paper: ask for general responses from readers with different perspectives.	Offer a genuine response from your unique perspective.
Ask the reader to point out particularly successful or problematic areas of the essay.	Talk with the writer about why you found particular parts to be successful or problematic, but let the writer work out how to address problem areas.

Because the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate help is not perfectly clear and varies across cultures, instructional contexts, and professional contexts, it can be very helpful to talk through questions and scenarios. Here are a couple of common questions to consider:

1. Can I ask my roommate, or my mom or dad, to look over my paper?
2. Can I give my paper to someone to correct?
3. Can I ask someone to make suggestions or help me think through my ideas?
4. Do I have to cite a friend or peer that gave me an idea for my paper?

Rather than trying to answer these with a "yes" or "no," use the strategies above to consider how you might appropriately ask your roommate or a relative for help.

*Developed by members of the Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program at the University of Rochester.*