

Paper Evaluation Guidelines¹

1 Objectives

Your goal for the peer review is to give your fellow students *constructive* feedback from the perspective of someone in their intended audience. Constructive feedback not only points out areas for improvement, but also suggests ideas for effecting that improvement, though such suggestions can be implicit. As described in more detail below, you should concentrate your feedback on the paper's exposition rather than its underlying mathematics (though if you spot a mathematical error, do point it out!).

Hopefully, you will also learn about your own writing in the process, either by realizing how some of these guidelines apply to your own paper, or by getting ideas from the papers you review.

Your feedback need not be extensive (i.e. you do not need to comment on every last line), but it should be substantial (i.e. it should help the author improve their paper).

2 Review Criteria

Your review of your peer's paper should concentrate on the following criteria:

The level of discussion: That is, did the paper successfully address an audience of the author's peers? Think about whether the author has motivated you to be curious about their topic, chosen illustrations and examples to help the reader understand definitions and proofs, and assumed a reasonable level of background (that is, the author did not spend time on background you already know, nor did they assume things that you don't).

The clarity of the writing: Is the overall structure of the paper clear and sensible? Are the arguments logically clear? Does the author need to do more to tell you about the structure? Is notation and terminology clearly explained and well-chosen?

Minor corrections about grammar are fine, but not essential; they are the author's responsibility.

Mathematical correctness: Do the definitions make sense? Are the theorems stated clearly? Are any proofs or examples explained completely (unless the author explicitly says that they are not meant to be) and correctly?

Let me reiterate that questions of mathematical correctness are not your primary responsibility in the peer review process.

3 Suggested Comments

In general, it would be nice to tell the author what you think works well as well as giving constructive criticisms. So you might think of using phrases such as "I really liked how you . . ." or "I found your discussion of X to be particularly clear" — the more specific you are, the more useful the comment.

¹This document was created by Caitlin Levenson, who borrowed largely from Josh Sabloff.

For the level of discussion, you might want to start with phrases like:

- You might consider whether your reader already knows X from class / linear algebra / etc.
- I would have benefited from a [further] example / illustration of concept X. Maybe add one in at point Y ?

For the clarity of the writing, you might want to use phrases like:

- I'm not sure I understood the transition from X to Y .
- Could you explain why you did X?
- Could you do a bit more to explain the overall goals / structure of your paper? [And suggest how and where to do so.]

For the mathematics itself, you might want to use phrases like:

- I don't understand the part of the proof where you [Try to be specific here.]
- Could you re-check . . . ?

These are suggestions and are not meant to limit what you say.

4 Citations

The author should make clear the relationship between the content of the paper and that of their sources. Where did Theorem X come from? How does the proof of Proposition Y differ from that in source [Z]?

Draft of Final Project Paper Evaluation

Your name:

Authors of Paper:

Title of Paper:

Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “strongly agree”, 2 means “agree”, 3 means “neutral”, 4 means “disagree”, and 5 means “more strongly disagree”.

	1	2	3	4	5
The main topic of the paper was clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The paper contains consistent and correct mathematics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could follow the mathematical arguments and/or computations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The exposition of the paper was good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any new ideas and topics introduced in the paper are well explained	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Topics are presented in a logical order	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adequate references were provided	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The paper is understandable to students in Math 4803	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments: (Everyone would likely prefer if you type these up. You should also add comments to the paper itself.)