

UNDERSTANDING PROFESSOR FEEDBACK

What do these notes and abbreviations mean?

Professors often have limited time to give feedback and want to provide guidance rather than tell you exactly what to change. They may use abbreviations or short notes to point you toward a successful revision. We explain some of the most common notes below.

Argument

Awkward “awk”: The writing may be confusing or distract from your point. This is often caused by vague and indirect wording. Review your writing for clarity, passive voice, and conciseness.

Citation “cite”: The information requires an in-text citation, or record, of where you learned it. Consult your sources and cite the information in the style your professor requires.

Evidence “ev”: Your claim needs additional support to convince your reader, either from one of your sources or from your own explanation.

Clarity/Cohesion “c”: Your argument may not be well-structured or organized. Read through your paper, paying attention to the order of your ideas, how your evidence and ideas build upon each other, and how your audience will interpret and connect ideas between paragraphs. Consider rewriting your transitions and reverse outlining.

Grammar

Agreement “agr”: Your subject and verb are not in agreement in terms of plurality. A singular subject uses a singular verb; a plural subject uses a plural verb.

Diction/Word Choice “d”: Due to either definition or connotation, the word or words you have chosen do not accurately convey the meaning you intended. Double check your word choice.

Sentence Fragment “f” or Run-on Sentence “r”: A sentence fragment is an incomplete idea or a dependent clause, neither of which can stand on its own as a sentence. Run-on sentences are too long and typically contain at least two full sentences that can be separated. See our Clauses handout for more information.

Misplaced “mp” or Dangling “da” Modifier: Modifiers add information to complete sentences, but where you place them can cause confusion for your reader. Review Using Modifiers for help.

Parallel Structure “pll”: Your writing is imbalanced or emphasizes one idea over another because you are not using similar phrases and clauses to describe related ideas. When listing items, use either the gerund (-ing) or infinitive (to verb) form for every item in the list.

Pronoun Reference “p.rev”: Pronouns must refer back to a specific, recently-used noun. This mark means your reader cannot determine what noun a pronoun refers to; see Using Pronouns for more information.

Passive Voice “pv”: Passive voice uses the “to be” verb and is both less direct and more wordy. Many professors prefer you to use the active voice; review our Passive Voice handout.

Tense “t”: Your writing should (in most cases) stay in one tense – past, present, or future – and not change. This indicates that either the tense has changed or is wrong for the topic.

Wordiness “w” or Vagueness “v”: You are using too many words to explain your ideas, and your sentences are too long. Review your writing for conciseness.