



**DeYoung Consulting Services**

*Helping People Learn up to Their Potential*

Have you ever been asked by a colleague to edit something they had written? If so, you know it can be a delicate situation. Here are a few things to keep in mind the next time you need to review someone's work.

**Understand your role.** Ask the writer what they want you to do. Are you simply proofreading for spelling, punctuation or grammar? Or, is your job to provide more substantial editing? When you edit you might comment on the flow of the piece, point out flaws in logic and suggest revisions. Sometimes your job might be to proofread but you feel compelled to comment on other concerns with the piece.

**Think about your relationship to the writer.** If the writer is a recent college graduate who has never written a proposal they might need more suggestions. But, editing your new boss's work will require more tact.

**Keep the audience in mind.** If a written document is being reviewed internally among a group of established co-workers, there is more room for generosity to the writer. But, if the piece is a proposal to a potential customer for a major project, you might need to be a bit more thorough in your proofreading and editing.

**Maintain the writer's style.** Everyone has a unique writing voice. Depending on the type of written product, the style may need to be toned down. If you're editing a piece that allows for a distinct voice try to keep the writer's words as much as possible. You can shorten or combine sentences or move phrases around and still maintain the writer's manner.

**Use constructive criticism.** Everyone loves compliments. And saying something kind can cushion the blow of a critique. Make note of the positive aspects of the piece—particularly if there is a correction or suggestion. For example, you could say something like, "This is a strong sentence. You could start the whole proposal with it."

**Offer your thoughts as a reader.** You don't need give your opinion on the piece to suggest improvements. Instead, you can comment on whether you

received the message by saying, "This sentence confused me. Maybe splitting it into two sentences will clarify it." This will encourage the writer to take another look at that part of the piece.

**Give ideas, not recommendations.** The difference between giving an idea and a recommendation can be a fine line. By saying something like, "This paragraph might go better in the conclusion," you empower the writer. Often they will take act on your idea and improve the document.

If you need help editing or proofreading your employee or client materials, give me a call. I can make sure your written materials provide a clear message for your reader.

*Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.*

DeYoung Consulting Services  
Helping People Learn up to Their Potential  
4834 Park Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55417  
(612) 822-8872  
(612) 220-3440 mobile  
deyoung4@aol.com  
[www.deyoungconsultingservices.com](http://www.deyoungconsultingservices.com)