



Paper Evaluation Marks

How to Interpret the Scribbles

Below are the abbreviations I use to try to communicate a lot with a little. The marks may single out individual words, but also may apply to a whole sentence or region in your paper. If don't understand how a mark applies, or would like specific ways to improve marked mistakes, come see me sometime, and we'll talk!

sx syntax. Something is wrong with the structure of a phrase or sentence; it's kooky English, or barely English at all. May be marked over a word, or be followed by a line indicating the problem continues.

[Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]*

seq sequencing problem. Something you've said is out of order, either in a recounting of facts, or in the structure of your paper. [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

lg/f logical or factual error. You've said something that's just plain wrong, or there's a problem in your thinking—an illogical conclusion or assumption, for example. May have an explanatory note.

[Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

!?! crazy talk. I've lost you. This doesn't make any sense at all. More punctuation marks may be used, depending on my befuddlement level. [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

vx vague. More details are needed. You may have referred to something you haven't properly established beforehand, or you've made such a general statement that it doesn't really make sense. [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

rel relevance? This doesn't seem to logically connect to anything else you're saying.

[Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

we word choice. You've used a word incorrectly, or could have chosen a better word for what you're trying to say. In extreme cases, you've made something up.

[Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

ncs not a complete sentence. You've written only a piece of a sentence. Useful sometimes, but incorrect or poor form in other circumstances. [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

sys so you said. You've repeated yourself. [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

|| needs parallel structure. Perhaps you've listed items that ought to be similar, or paired different parts of speech that could be better matched ("he ran crazily and awkward," for example.) [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

ps passive construction. You've used a passive voice for something that would be better if it were stated in the active. [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

pp purple prose. Words or phrases so overly descriptive or flowery that they draw unnecessary attention to themselves. (from a phrase coined by the Roman poet Horace.) [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

😊 very nice! A smiley face marks something that's well-said, a point well-made, or a well-chosen word or phrase that I find especially impressive! [Average severity: 1 2 3 4 5]

**The "average severity" scale is an attempt to indicate how serious such errors generally are in a paper—mostly based on how much such an error impacts effective and accurate communication. An error with a low score on the scale has little averse effect overall, whereas an error with a high score could seriously confuse or frustrate a reader.*