

What is "Calibrated Peer Review" (CPR)[™] and Why Are We Doing It?

Employers often identify communication skills as the most important characteristics of a prospective employee immediately following graduation from college. Your English and technical writing courses don't give you enough practice writing in a particular discipline. Learning to write well requires regular practice and feedback. Weekly writing assignments are rare because grading large numbers essays is very time consuming. Also, most writing classes don't give you enough practice in critiquing your own work and that of others.

In this chemistry class, we will be using a web-based program, called Calibrated Peer Review (CPR). Each CPR assignment can be worth 1/3 of an exam. I'll be taking the best 3 scores from your 3 exams and 3 writing assignments to give a 4th exam score. This is truly optional. You'll get regular practice and feedback, even in our large class; at the same time you will gain the critical evaluation skills that employers want.

Calibrated Peer Review (CPR)[®] is web-based software designed to increase the amount of writing done while teaching other subjects, including chemistry. The program accomplishes this by having you, as students, evaluate each other's writing. Since "peer review" is useful only if you take the job seriously, CPR "calibrates" you by having you first read essays of known quality. So the process is this:

(1) Time Period A: You will read and/or do the necessary background information on a chemistry-related topic, then write an essay about the topic following guidelines, and submit this on-line through the CPR program. Do not put your name on your paper. You must also submit it to turnitin.com (see page 5). Then wait until Time Period B begins. You can run it by me before you hand it in for pointers.

(2) Time Period B: You will then be "calibrated" so that we know you can with some expertise be able to recognize a poor essay, a reasonable essay and a good one. After calibration, you will be given 3 of your fellow students' essays to review. This is done anonymously. If you do well at the calibration, your reviews of other students' essays will be worth more. Assignment grades depend on the quality of your own essay, your reviews of other students, and the final critique of your own essay. So, you can write a mediocre essay, but still get points because you recognized that you could have done better. I realize that you and your peers are new at peer review, so if you feel your essay was graded unfairly, email me a request to regrade your essay.

Question 1: This is my first CPR in the class, how do I access my assignment?

- Go to the CPR Login Page (<http://cpr.tamu.edu/>) and click on "Access CPR at TAMU."
- Enter your CPR username and password. You will not have to take the website tour again if you have already taken it. If you forgot your CPR username, click on **Users: forgot your login information?** After selecting your institution and student ID (your UIN number), you will be prompted to answer your question. If you do so correctly, you will be asked to give a new password. If you failed to answer your own question, you can send an email to Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt at Kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu. She will reset your CPR account.
- **If you are a new user, follow the New Users; First time login link.**
- Select your school from the list (we're the only school)
- Enter your UIN number - DO NOT USE DASHES. **If the server does NOT recognize your ID, first make sure you are on the correct website (cpr.tamu.edu). If you are on the correct site, contact Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt, the Administrator, by e-mail at kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu. Please include your Section in the e-mail.**
- Complete your profile by creating a password and a challenge question. The server will give you your CPR username.. *Write these down somewhere you can find them. Please choose a challenge question that you CAN remember the answer for in the future.*

You will use this username and the password you created to access all your CPR assignments in ALL your courses at TAMU. If you are using CPR in more than one course, this username will allow you to access all of them. **If your student ID is NOT recognized by the server, first make sure you are on the correct website (cpr.tamu.edu). If you still cannot get in, check with Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt, the CPR Administrator (kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu) right away - include your section.**

Question 2: What do I do if I need help in writing my paragraph? (More Hints on page 3)

There are several things you can do. Have a friend read your paragraph or simply read it out loud yourself and see if it makes sense. Write it in a word processing program so you can check spelling and grammar. Ask your TA or instructor to give you some pointers to help guide you. Also there is a University Writing Center in Evans Library. UWC is located on the second floor of the Evans Library in Suite 1.214. Check the website for hours: <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu>. You can even work with consultants on line. Appointments are recommended, but the consultants will take walk-ins as time allows. For more information, see page 3, "How To Do Well On Your CPR Assignment."

Question 3: How do I format my TEXT entry?

You will want to use the minimum of HTML tags in your paragraph, because your work is easier to proof. HTML is very easy to do. One suggestion: write your text using a word processor, paste it into the CPR Text Entry box, then add the HTML tags, given at the bottom of the back of this handout. If you make a mistake in your HTML, your TEXT could be "invisible" to your reviewers and you will receive a lower score. Use the PREVIEW button often. If the PREVIEW button isn't working for you, try a different computer - it may be browser sensitive.

Always save your TEXT entry on your own computer. Be sure to check that you have received confirmation from the server that your text has been submitted. The CPR Administrator, Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt (kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu) can verify this also. Check the timing for when you will start the reviewing process.

Question 4: The assignment is over, and what does it all mean?

When the assignment END time has passed, you can check your results. To help you understand your results, look at the page 4 of this handout.

Getting Started with CPR:

You will need to know your CPR Username and your password to access the CPR program.

To complete an account profile for a New User:

1. Go to the following URL: <http://cpr.tamu.edu/> and click on "Access CPR at TAMU."
2. Select "New Users: first time logging in?"
3. Select **YOUR SCHOOL** from the pull down menu and enter your UIN. **DO NOT INCLUDE DASHES.** You may have to wait until the administrator gets your ID into the system. Check with your instructor. If there is still a problem, contact the administrator at kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu - include your instructor's name and section.
4. Next, you will select a password. You will also need to enter a challenge question and answer. If you forget your login information, this challenge question will be asked of you to confirm your identity, so choose a question/answer that you will not forget and that others do not know.
5. Next, there is a field to enter your email address; this is optional.
6. Upon completion of your account profile, you will be given your unique **CPR username**. Make sure that you save your **CPR username**. You will need it every time you access CPR.

Before starting your first CPR assignment:

- After entering your *CPR* username and password, you will be directed to take a 10-minute tour of the website. If you get returned to the login page and cannot take the tour, email Dr. K (kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu).
- Click on the "CPR Guided Tour" link and then the "Taking an Assignment" link- .Take the short PreTest for new users.
All information necessary to complete the PreTest can be found in the CPR Tour: "Taking an Assignment." You must take this tour prior to taking the PreTest. If you are a CPR veteran, you won't need to take the tour and PreTest.

Assignment Structure -Both stages are required to complete the assignment. There are two parts to a CPR assignment:

Part A: <begins with Assignment Start Time>

During this stage you will

- a) explore source material about the assignment topic.
- b) write about the topic. (**30 POINTS**) You can submit your paragraph as many times as you want until the due date.
You must also submit it separately to Turnitin through the class's elearning website.

<ends with Text Entry End Time>

SUGGESTION: Write your text in MSWord or another program and do spelling and grammar check. This will serve as a backup should a problem occur during the submission process. If you miss the deadline due to technical problems, email me immediately with your paragraph and I can submit your paragraph for you.

Part B: <begins with Text Entry End Time>

During this stage you will evaluate

- a) three example texts written specifically for this assignment (**30 POINTS**). These evaluations are called " calibrations." You only have only **two** opportunities to do each calibration, then you must go on.
- b) three texts written by your classmates (**30 POINTS**). This stage is called "reviews." **BE KIND BUT FAIR** in your comments to your classmates.
- c) your own text. This stage is called the "self-assessment." (**10 POINTS**)
<Ends with Assignment End Time >

After the assignment ends:

You can now check your assignment results. For clarification, go see "How to Interpret Your Results" on page 4 of this handout. **If you don't agree with your classmates' assessment of your work, please email or visit Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt (kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu, Rm 116 HELD) and she will reassess your work. Her decision is final.**

Important Points:

- CPR is on a secure TAMU server so the official time is Central time on the server. You can check the CPR time by clicking on the "CPR Time" link on the top of the assignment screens.
- Always save your text entry on the local computer, a separate computer, and/or a flash drive before submitting 'it to CPR.**
- Most Internet Service Providers (ISP's, like Bruin On-Line, Earth link, and MSN) terminate Internet connections that have not been used for more than 10 -20 minutes. If a connection is terminated and you try to submit work, it will be **LOST**.
- CPR does **NOT** work with the AOL browser. Make your internet connection with AOL, then switch to the Internet Explorer (4.x or 5.x) or the Netscape (4.7x) browsers.

HTML Tags for formatting your text: They do not count as words IF DONE CORRECTLY. Always check with Preview button.

 text Displays the enclosed text in boldface; Hi gives **Hi**.

<I> text </I> Displays the enclosed text in italics; <I>Hi</I> gives *Hi*.

_{text} Displays the enclosed text subscripted; H₂O gives H₂O.

^{text} Displays the enclosed text superscripted; Na⁺¹ gives Na⁺¹

<CENTER> text </CENTER> Centers the text on the line

 Inserts a line break after the text.

<P> or </P> Inserts a blank line after the text. Always preview your text. If the preview button isn't working, try a different computer.

For a forward arrow (→) in an equation, type --> (dash,dash,ampersand,g,t,semicolon) and a double headed arrow (<-->) can be <-->; (ampersand,l,t,semicolon,dash,dash,ampersand,g,t,semicolon).

These are the only tags you will need in this class.

How to Do Well on Your CPR Assignment

Number 1 - Be aware of the deadlines and don't miss them. It is very important to your score. If you miss the deadline for Part 1, you cannot continue and you will miss 70% of your score! The times are given as Central Time.

Number 2 - For questions, check the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at the Login page.

(Note: The grading criteria vary from course to course. The scoring presented here is what I am using in my class in First Year Chemistry Program at TAMU)

There are 4 parts to a CPR Assignment (You are given about 1 week to complete Part A (1) and about 1 week to complete Part B (2,3,4) - see your schedule.)

Part A Part 1 (30 pts) - Writing your paragraph

Part B Part 2 (30 pts) - Calibrating your skills as a reviewer

Part 3 (30 pts) - Reviewer your peers

Part 4 (10 pts) - Reviewing your own paragraph

Part 1: Writing your paragraph (30 pts).

- DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST HOUR - you may experience technical problems and then it may be too late to fix them.
- If you have any technical problems, contact Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt (Rm 116 HELD) at kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu.
- Remember to submit your essay twice – once to CPR and once to Turnitin on our class page at elearning.tamu.edu (directions on page 5).
- Read the information and go to the links - DO THE RESEARCH BEFORE WRITING.
- Your writing should be similar in level to a chemistry textbook written for AP or college chemistry, unless otherwise specified.
- You can resubmit your paragraph as many times as you wish up until the deadline.
- Write in a word-processing program - then paste it into the block. If you take too long writing your paragraph directly on the website, you will be timed out and have problems submitting your text. **KEEP A COPY**, so that if there is a problem, you can resubmit.
- Include ALL the answers to the Guiding Questions in your paragraph, but be sure that your paragraph reads smoothly.
- Make sure you have an introductory sentence.
- Make your sentences "tighter" to get within the word limits. Scientists do not use unnecessary words. It is a real skill to be able to write a summary or abstract. Pick your words carefully. Instead of long sentences with lots of prepositional phrases, use adjectives.
For example: The reaction occurring between acids and bases involves the formation of a salt and sometimes water is also formed.
Rewritten: Acid-base reactions form salt and sometimes water.
- Always check your paragraph using spell and grammar check. The process is not always perfect since most spellcheckers are not set up to read scientific explanations but it helps. Make sure you use complete sentences and that the subject agrees with the verb - plural subjects require the plural form of the verb. Also, if a word is used incorrectly but is spelled correctly, spell check won't find it, but it is still considered to be a misspelling.
For example: The main principal used in equilibria is LeChatelier's Principle.
Problem: "Principal" is the person in charge of a school; the word required here is "principle."
- Have a friend read your paragraph or simply read it out loud yourself and see if it makes sense.
- Ask your TA or instructor to give you some pointers to help guide you.
- Visit the University Writing Center in Evans Library (<http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/>). UWC is located on the second floor of the Evans Library in Room 1.214 and on West Campus. For more information visit the website. They are aware of CPR and how it is handled.
- Use a minimum of html tags in your paragraph - it makes it easier to read. See other sheet for listing of appropriate html tags.
- BEWARE: If you do NOT submit your paragraph on time, you CANNOT do the rest of the assignment and you lose 70 out of 100 points! If you do miss the deadline - contact ASAP Dr. K at kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu. Sometimes, but not always, we can submit your paragraph for you.
- Your grade will depend on your peer's evaluation of your work, but if you think your peers were in error, please contact Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt at kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu.

Part 2: Calibrating Your Skills As a Reviewer (30 pts - 10 pts per calibration).

- There will be 3 calibrations. You will be given a good paragraph, a fair paragraph and a poor paragraph on the topic (not necessarily in that order). To pass a calibration, you must (a) get most of the style questions correct (65%), (b) get most of the content questions correct (65%), and (c) your overall score of the paragraph must be within ± 2.5 of the rating given by the composer of the assignment. To pass the calibration, you must do well on (a), (b) and (c). You will have 2 chances for each calibration. If you do a good job on your second try, you will still get 10 out of 10 points.
- Be a fair reviewer. Don't think you are doing a favor by grading easy - you will only hurt yourself.
- **Content is more important than grammar, spelling and style.** It is a good rule of thumb to deduct a maximum of 2 - 3 only on the overall score for bad style, which includes bad grammar, spelling errors, absence of an introductory sentence, etc. An easy way to grade objectively is to calculate the % correct and divide by 10.
- To check for spelling errors and grammar problems, copy the paragraph into a word-processing program and do a grammar/spell check. The program will catch most of the problems. You can also visit the University Writing Center or ask me.

Part 3: Reviewing Your Peers (30 pts - 10 pts per review).

- You will be reviewing 3 of your peers, just like you did the calibrations. In this class, for you to get the full 10 points per review, the score you give your peer's paragraph (out of 10 pts), must be within ± 2.5 of the weighted average rating given by all the reviewers. The scorings made by reviewers who did well on their calibrations will be weighted heavier; the scorings made by reviewers who did poorly on their calibrations will not be given much weight at all. If your rating lies outside ± 2.5 of the average, you will get a 0.
- Be a fair reviewer. Don't think you are doing a favor by grading easy - you will only hurt yourself. On the other hand, don't give someone a terrible grade undeservedly because somehow you think that will help you or the class curve. That person will likely complain about your review to Dr. Keeney-Kennicutt, have the scoring changed and you will lose all your reviewing points.
- Content is more important than grammar and style. It is a good rule of thumb to deduct a maximum of 2 - 3 pts for bad style (use the rubric), which includes bad grammar, spelling errors, absence of an introductory sentence, etc. An easy way to grade objectively is to calculate the % correct and divide by 10. Don't just add up the yes answers – sometimes a yes answer is not good.
- To check for spelling errors and grammar problems, copy the paragraph into a word-processing program and do a grammar/spell check. The program will catch most of the problems. You can also visit the University Writing Center.

Part 4: Reviewing Your Own Paragraph (10 pts).

- To get a full 10 points, your self-assessment must be ± 1.5 of the weighted average given by your peers. To get 5 points, you must be ± 2.5 of your peers' assessment. So, for example, if you wrote a poor paragraph, judged to be a 3.5 by your peers, if you gave yourself a 5.0, you are ± 1.5 of the judgment of your peers and you get 10 points. If you gave yourself a 6.0, you are ± 2.5 of the peers' assessment and you get 5 points. However if you give yourself a 7.0, you get 0 points for your self-assessment.
- Be a fair reviewer of yourself. Many times a person will give themselves a 10, even if they have obvious spelling mistakes. To check for spelling errors and grammar problems, copy the paragraph into a word-processing program and do a grammar/spell check. The program will catch most of the problems. You can also visit the University Writing Center. Of course, you should have done this before your paragraph was submitted! An easy way to grade objectively is to calculate the % correct and divide by 10.
- Your grade will depend on your peer's evaluation of your work, but if you think your peers were in error, please contact Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt at kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu. More on the scoring on "Understanding Your Results Page."

How to Interpret Your Results - It's Easier Than It Looks

When the assignment is finally over and you log into your CPR page for the assignment, you will see:

Click on "Assign Info" to get information about this assignment.

Click here and see CPR Time - Central Time

Here are the results of the reviews that you did of other students.

Here is the limit of how far you can be away from the average and still have mastered the reviews and received full credit for your reviews of others.

If you mastered a review, you received 10 points - if not, you got 0

Here are the scoring parameters for the self-assessment: ± 1.5 for full 10 points and ± 2.5 for 5 points.

HOME | CPR Time | LOG OFF

Assign Info

CPR Stages

Source Material

Calibration Results

Reviews

Self-Assessment

Results

Reviews You Performed

Answer Key	Max. Allowable Dev. = 2.5	
Reviews	Rating Deviation	Overall Grade
Review 1	1.00	Mastered
Review 2	0.12	Mastered
Review 3	1.21	Mastered

Reviews Performed of Your Work

Answer Key	Max. Allowable Deviation = 1.5 / 2.5
Questions	Answers
	Review 1 Review 2 Review 3 Self-Assessment
1. Does the essay have a descriptive topic sentence? (Does the first sentence of the essay accurately introduce the subject of the entire essay?)	No Yes Yes Yes
2. Do you expect the acid...	No Yes Yes Yes
3. Is base...	
4. Is best...	
5. Do...	
6. Is the t...	
7. Is solu...	
8. Do the i...	
9. Are dire...	
10. Are there any spelling errors in the essay?	No No No No
11. Are there significant grammatical errors in the essay? (For example, run-on sentences or sentence fragments, missing articles, or subject-verb disagreements)	No Yes No No
12. How would you rate this text?	5 7 9 7
Weight Applied to Ratings	0.83 0.83 0.83
Weighted Average Text Rating	7.00

Scores and Overall Grade

Stage	Performance	Score
Text Entry	Avg. Weighted Text Rating = 7.00	21.00 out of 30
Calibrations	Avg. Calibration Deviation = 0.00	30.00 out of 30
Reviews	Avg. Review Deviation = 0.78	30.00 out of 30
Self-Assessment	Self-Assessment Deviation = 0.00	10.00 out of 10
Overall Score		91.00 out of 100

The small arrow means you are looking at the "Results" page.

Click here to see your peers' explanations of why they gave you the score they did.

This weight factor depends on how well the reviewer did on the calibrations. A person who did terribly on the calibrations has an RCI of 1 (ranges from 1 to 6), a weight of 0 and doesn't affect your self-assessment score.

If any scores appear in red at the bottom after a week or so, then Dr. Keeney-Kennicutt or some other qualified instructor has looked at a paragraph (either yours or your peers) and reassessed it. This may or may not change your final score. If you have any questions, or want your scores reassessed, contact her at kennicutt@mail.chem.tamu.edu.

If the Self-Assessment Deviation is 1.5 or less, you get 10 pts, if 2.5 or less, you get 5 pts, if greater than 2.5, 0 pts.

Your paragraph's score is 3x the rating given it by your peers.

Your total score for the assignment - it can be worth 1/3 of an exam.

How to Use Turnitin in our Class

UNTIL YOU SUBMIT TO TURNITIN, YOU WILL HAVE A 0 FOR YOUR CPR ASSIGNMENT.

I know that many of you are unfamiliar with what constitutes plagiarism, commonly defined as the act of passing off someone else's work as your own. You will learn more about plagiarism at TAMU as you work on your first Calibrated Peer Review assignment.

This semester, we will be using Turnitin, as a monitor so that you can check your writing for plagiarism in your CPR assignments.

Access Turnitin using our class page on elearning.tamu.edu

To submit a paper, log in to elearning.tamu.edu and click on the assignment. Just follow the directions. You can upload your text by cut and paste or by file upload.

Cut and Paste: This is very straightforward. **DO NOT** add HTML tags; it is not necessary and will only confuse you when you look at the report.

Uploading the file: Type your essay title into the text box and click "Browse," and the "Choose File" box will open so that you can locate the correct file on your computer. Click on the file you want; its name will appear in the text box, then click "Open." The file name and address will appear in the Browse box, and then hit "Submit." After submission, you will see the message: "Your paper has been submitted. Below is a digital receipt for your submission. A copy of this receipt will also be emailed to you. If you would like, print the receipt below for your records."

You can resubmit your assignment as many times as you wish. The first time you submit, you should be able to immediately look at your "Originality Report." After submission, click on "Class Portfolio." There is a small colored box to the right of the submission date. The color denotes how original your paper is. If it is gray, either the program hasn't finished checking or you have submitted more than once. When you click on the box after your first submission, you'll see your "Originality Report." Any part of your text in red can be considered by me to be plagiarized IF it hasn't been properly cited. The program cannot tell if you have cited correctly. Even if you put the phrase in quotes, it will still turn up red. Don't worry - if that's the case, we will be able to tell. You can click on "Side-By-Side Version" near the top right hand corner to see your paper and the one to which it was compared.

Your essays for CPR must be submitted to Turnitin on elearning.tamu.edu by the assignment deadlines or you will get a zero for the assignment, even if your work is original. I will be checking everyone's work for each assignment to be sure (1) it was submitted in the time limits and (2) it passed the guidelines for plagiarism (blue, green or yellow in color).

How to use Turnitin on elearning.tamu.edu for Calibrated Peer Review (CPR):

All CPR assignments are due at 11:50pm (Central Time). So the deadline for submitting your essay to Turnitin will be the same time. However, if you forget, just turn in your essay as soon as you remember. Note that your submission is stamped with the date. The server time for Turnitin is Central Time. Hopefully, you will check yourself for plagiarism before that time, so you can rewrite if necessary. If I discover that you plagiarized the assignment or did not submit your essay to Turnitin.com on time, you will receive a 0 for that entire assignment. I will give you back your grade on a person-by-person basis once you submit it to Turnitin.

Common Writing Errors

(Thanks to Dr. Pat Lynch)

Run-on Sentence:

Incorrect: *The strategy proved to be effective with all students, it was a favorite of many teachers.*

Correct: The strategy proved to be effective with all students; it was a favorite of many teachers. (You need to use a semicolon rather than a comma.)

Inappropriate use of Apostrophe:

Incorrect: *It's use is common.* "It's" is the contraction for "It is"; the apostrophe does NOT denote the possessive case in this instance.

Correct: *Its use is common.*

It's = it is

Its = the possessive form of it

Hints: **DO NOT** use apostrophes for plural nouns (she gave it to her parents'). **DO** use apostrophes to indicate possession: (my mother's book - our mothers' books, except with "its").

Agreement with pronouns:

Incorrect: *If the student loses **their** books . . .* This is incorrect, because the noun is singular (student) and your pronoun is plural (their).

Correct: *If the student loses his or her books . . .*

They're, there, their: **Correct:** They're going home. Their book is here. There is the house.

Parallel structure in lists: When writing a sequence, all items in the sequence should be the same format.

Incorrect: *The following are critical: planning instruction, use good teaching, and make evaluations.*

Correct: The following are critical: planning instruction, teaching effectively, and evaluating results.

Vague Pronouns: *This method has been used effectively; **they** have found it useful with all grades.* Who are "**they**?"

Do not use a colon after a verb or preposition.

"Proven" – avoid using this word in summarizing research. It is very rare that a single study will "prove" something. It may "indicate" or "suggest" but not prove. Similarly, "the study showed." The authors may have "found" certain results in this

instance, but that does not show that something is a truth. It is best to avoid absolute statements altogether. This includes the following: all, none, never, always.

Check out These Resources!

1. Common Errors in English (<http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.txt>)
2. Common Errors in Student Writing (<http://www.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/writerro.htm>)
3. Common Writing Errors (<http://www.arc.sbc.edu/writingerrors.html>)
4. Common Writing Errors (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/marking/alpha.htm>)
5. Notes on Common Writing Errors (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sullivan/CommonWritingErrors.html>)
6. Writing Rules to Make You Smile: (<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~bioslabs/tools/report/wrules.html>)