REVIEWING & WRITING
WITH CNTRL

Reviewing with the CNTRL Criteria

Academic outlets use (peer) reviewers, who critically look at the value of submitted papers, give an evaluation (to the editor) and constructive criticism (to the author). Often, the review is double blind, which means authors and reviewers don't know each other's names.

In reviewing papers (or posters, reports, etc), reviewers use a set of criteria to judge the work.

CLEAR

Ask
Can I see what the author wants to say? Is the whole thing a puzzle for me? Can I see the 30 second message?

Do
Attend to your spelling, grammar, word use, definitions, examples, visuals.
Communicate your main theme clearly and early (in the introduction and abstract)

NEW

Ask
Do I learn anything I didn't know yet? Did the author add value? Is it more than a summary?

Do
Make clear what your contribution is and how it goes further than what the audience already knows. Even a literature review brings something new.

TRUE

Ask
Am I convinced? Is evidence given? Is the claim proven? Do I trust the reasoning? (not: Is it my opinion too?)

Do
Cite sources, give evidence and argue why it warrants the claims. Explain, define, visualize.

RELEVANT

Ask
Can I use this? Will it help me do my job? Does it connect to the theme?

Do
Consider the expectations of your audience, their interests, and needs.

Reader-centered writing: an empathic strategy

Writing and reviewing is like User-Centered Design: you need to 'step into the shoes of the user', to look at your text through the eyes of the intended reader, even if that reader is in some ways different from you. A reviewer needs to do this (for readers of his own community, e.g., a journal). A writer needs to do this. During the writing, look afresh at your text, through the eyes of the reader and reviewer (use the CNTRL criteria to help you).

LIKE

Ask
Does it excite me? Is there a spark? Something special that doesn't fit CNTR criteria? (feel free to be subjective here)

Do
Bring something original, show excitement, bring lively quotes and examples, have an evocative title or visual.

This is where it begins. If it's not clear, the other criteria cannot be judged

Here's where communities have their specific rules, demands, and expectations

And yes, there's more than just these rules