Guidelines for Using Reviewers’ Comments

Don’t take criticism personally.
Your reader is responding to your writing — not to you. It may be frustrating to hear that you still have work ahead of you, but taking feedback seriously will make your piece stronger.

Pay attention to ideas that contradict your own.
If comments show that a reader doesn’t understand what you’re trying to do or say, don’t be defensive. Instead, consider why your reader is confused and figure out how to clarify your point. Responding to readers’ objections (instead of dismissing them) often will strengthen your ideas and make your work more compelling.

Make choices about the feedback you’ll use.
Sometimes different readers will be in agreement, but often their advice will differ greatly. Sort through the comments and suggestions you receive with your original goals in mind. Notice where readers make comments — not just their suggestions for “fixing” the draft. There’s almost always more than one way to revise, but if readers have problems at the same part of the draft, that’s a good sign that something needs to change.

Keep a revision log.
Make a clear and simple list of global concerns (e.g., development of sub-claims, organization) and sentence-level concerns (e.g., introducing evidence, subject-verb agreement) that readers frequently mention. Such a list can serve as a starting point each time you revise other work. When you take charge of your own writing in this way, comments will become a valuable resource rather than something to dread.