

Critique Group Guidelines

Submission guidelines

- Submissions should be formatted in 12-point font and double-spaced.
- Picture books and early readers are usually submitted in their entirety.
- Members should strive to give a thoughtful, complete critique in the time allotted. If you are unable to make the deadline, please alert the group and then try to complete the critique as soon as possible. It's important to be a reliable, dependable group member so that everyone can proceed with revising based on the critiques provided.
- Sometimes when an author submits a story, he/she is looking for specific feedback. Please mention that in your e-mail. For instance, someone might say, "I'm wondering if the plot line is a little convoluted. Are you able to follow it easily? If not, where do you get lost? Any suggestions on simplifying?"

How to give a good critique

- Read the entire submission at least once before making comments or suggestions.
- Approach each critique with kindness and honesty. It's important to get honest feedback to improve a story. Just as important is the ability to say things in a constructive, positive manner.
- Be specific in your feedback. "This is a nice story," and, "I can already picture the illustrations," are not effective tools to help an author revise. Give the author an idea of what is working and what is not. For example, you might say, "I laughed out loud when the ant couldn't get the picnic basket into his anthill. That kind of humor will appeal to children." Or, "You might think about the length of your opening paragraph. It seems a bit description heavy, and it's important in a picture book to introduce the character quickly." Different methods to critique specific items are using, a different colored font, italics, underlining, or **bolding**.
- Regarding weak spots: be honest yet diplomatic. Comment on the specific issue in the writing, never on the writer.
- Things to keep in mind while critiquing:
 1. Story arc
 2. Realistic character(s)
 3. Narrative flow
 4. Descriptive imagery
 5. Too much description (not enough room for illustrator)
 6. Pacing of story
 7. Plot/timing
 8. Grammar/punctuation (just note these during your critique, no comments needed)
- General guidelines to best critique a story: (taken from Carly Watters website)
 9. What is the work about?
 10. What about the work is effective? Why or how?
 11. What about the work is awkward or weak? Try to figure out why. How might it be made stronger?
 12. How would you describe the voice?
 13. What words or phrases are particularly effective?
 14. What words seem ill-chosen?
 15. Does anything confuse you?
 16. Pick one thing you think is the strongest.

17. Pick one thing you think is the weakest.

- Offer suggestions or ask questions if something in the story isn't working. Don't rewrite their work.
- Use the sandwich approach. Always begin your critique by saying positive things about the work. For the "filling of the sandwich" pose your suggestions for change by using words like "Have you considered changing the . . ." Or ask "Do you think your character's dialogue is too mature?" Finally, for the bottom of the sandwich, make a positive concluding statement. Remember above all else to nurture and support one another.
- All members of a critique group benefit from hearing members' thoughts, opinions and suggestions. Use "Reply All" so everyone can be part of the discussion.

How to receive a critique

- You will be receiving a lot of feedback. You will have to sort through the comments, think deeply, and make decisions on how to revise your story. Please know that you do not have to, nor is it wise, to take every piece of advice and twist your story around. It is the author's prerogative to pick and choose from the suggestions offered.
- Writers who put their egos aside, aren't on the defensive, and consider suggestions are more likely to improve. If you find that you are defensive and shut off to any suggestions, you might not grow as a writer. I like to read the critiques in the morning when I'm not tired. I also have found success by telling myself, "I'll just try this suggestion. I can always go back to the previous version." Chances are I'll prefer the change.

Sample of critiquing websites

<https://carlywatters.com/2013/10/14/how-to-critique-other-writers/>

<http://www.crayne.com/howcrit.html>

<http://jamigold.com/2013/04/three-tips-for-being-a-better-beta-reader/>

<https://thewritelife.com/tips-for-writing-critique/>

<https://www.dailywritingtips.com/10-tips-for-critiquing-other-people%E2%80%99s-writing/>

<https://www.writingforward.com/writing-tips/how-to-critique>

Samples of Websites offering revision tips that may benefit Critiquers

<https://www.freelancewriting.com/copywriting/ten-words-to-avoid-when-writing/>

<https://dianaurban.com/words-you-should-cut-from-your-writing-immediately>