

Writing a Critique

Note: **Critique** is pronounced / kri:ʔk / with the accent on the second syllable (thus, “cri-TEEK”).

One facet of our English 3A – 3B course is having students critique the various presentations that constitute the course. Critiquing is, of course, a valuable exercise that requires you to evaluate the work of others (or your own work) carefully with the idea of making improvements in future presentations.

The critiquing that I have in mind has two manifestations. One involves a grading rubric, and the second manifestation is written out in prose (links below). This document deals with prose critiques.

In your class, of course, feel free to use or modify these materials as you see fit.

The sections below could be shown (or even given) to the students.

How to write a critique

Before you start writing, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the presentation that you will write about.

- During the presentation, listen carefully.
- Write a memo about key points of the presentation and any remarks that you want to include in your critique.
- If necessary, you might contact the presenter(s) and ask for a copy of the presentation.

There are a variety of ways to structure a critique, but the following template shows the main features of a critique format that we will use in this course.

A critique usually includes four parts.

1. Introduction

Typically, the introduction is short, and you should:

- Include the name of the presenters, their topic, and the date of the presentation.
- Describe the main argument or purpose of the work.
- Have a concluding sentence that states the nature of your critique. For instance, it may indicate whether it is a positive, negative, or mixed evaluation.

2. Summary

Briefly summarize the main points and objectively describe how the presenters showed these by using techniques, styles, media, etc. *This summary should not be the focus of the critique and is usually shorter than the critical evaluation.*

3. Critical evaluation

This section should give a systematic and detailed assessment of the different elements of the work, addressing how well the presenter was able to achieve his/her the purpose. Here you could talk about any of the various points that are important in a presentation. For example, you might comment on the presenter's voice, eye contact, posture, and speed. Was the organization logical and easily understood? Was the software (e.g., PowerPoint) designed well and used effectively? Did the presenter ask for questions? Did the presenter answer questions well?

Note: *A critical evaluation does NOT only point out negative things. Your critique should mention both good and bad points as appropriate.*

This evaluation is written in formal academic style and logically presented. Group and order your ideas into paragraphs. Start with the broad impressions first and then move into the details of the technical elements. For shorter critiques, you may discuss the strengths of the works, and then the weaknesses. In longer critiques, you may wish to discuss the positive and negative of each key critical question in individual paragraphs.

4. Conclusion

This is usually a very brief paragraph that includes the following:

- A statement indicating the overall evaluation of the work
- A summary of the key reasons, identified during the critical evaluation, why this evaluation was formed.
- If appropriate, provide recommendations for improvement.

5. Reference list (if appropriate)

Include all resources cited in your critique (if any).

[Presentation evaluation form #1](#)

[Presentation evaluation form #2](#)

[Example of a self-critique in prose](#)

[Example of a critique of others in prose](#)