

Writing circles are opportunities to provide feedback on drafts of writing in progress. The four steps of reading the manuscript, critiquing, being critiqued and facilitating mean every person is involved in each task. Note that when writers talk about writing they refer firstly to structure, then style, and then language use.

**Reading the manuscript:**

- Note on the manuscript anything that strikes you. These comments will be valuable for the author (even if you do not say them).
- Note first impressions, reactions from a first reading or misunderstandings.
- Point out what impresses you – stars or comments of praise for a good phrase or passage are useful.
- Write nitpicks – anything small to help the author be consistent, such as use of words, length of sentences, the flow of ideas, consistency in punctuation, grammar corrections, small queries.
- Return your comments to the author after the session. Remember to sign your name as the reader.
- Make notes to share in the critiquing sessions. Focus only on the larger issues the author asked you to address, not the nitpicks.

**Critiquing:**

- Each critique should be brief.
- Each critique should be strictly in turn, without interruption from anyone else.
- Each critique should be centred on some important aspect of the writing.
- Each critique should be impersonal – it's the writing that's under discussion, not the author.
- Speak to the author, not other people, as you discuss the piece.
- Criticism must be constructive and lead to the possibility of revisions. Your critique must be of use to the author.
- Never ask the author a question that might bring forth a long explanation or defence. You may ask the author only direct, factual, yes or no questions. This is not an opportunity for the author to defend their writing. They are here to 'hear' where their writing is not clear.
- Do tell the writer where you were confused, surprised, annoyed or delighted, which parts you liked, what worked for you and what didn't.
- Suggestions for how to fix something may be valuable, but should be offered respectfully.
- Expand the group discussion without repetition. If somebody has said what you wanted to say, then do say, 'I agree with so and so about such and such.' If you disagree with a previous speaker, do say so and explain why.

**Being critiqued:**

- Before and during the entire session, the author of the piece under discussion is SILENT. This is an essential element of the process.

- Offer no defence, explanations or excuses.
- If asked to answer a question, be sure the whole group is willing for you to do so, and be as brief as possible.
- While being critiqued, do make notes of what people say about your writing. Note any comment that keeps coming up with different people.
- When all the discussion of your writing is over, you may speak if you want. If you have a question about your piece that wasn't addressed, ask it now. In general, the best response to your hard-working critics is 'Thank you'.
- You need to hear what people 'got' from your writing, what they think needs work, what they misunderstood and understood, disliked and liked. That's what you are here for.

**Facilitating the group:**

- Each author makes sure manuscripts are available to their group. You can have 10 people in a group, each with one to two pages.
- Start with a volunteer author's piece, and go around from there to every person at the table who would like their work reviewed.
- The critiquing also goes around the circle, every person speaking about every piece. You can pass on a turn to critique by saying 'pass'.
- Reverse directions from time to time.

Source: Write Persuasively Toolkit, [klgcommunications.com.au](http://klgcommunications.com.au)