

Writing a Critical Review - Article

Purpose of a Critical Review

The critical review summarizes and evaluates – in this case – an article. Writing the critical review usually requires you to read the selected article in detail and read other related articles so that you can present a fair and reasonable evaluation.

What is meant by *critical*?

In this case, to be critical does not mean to criticize in a negative manner. Instead, question the information and opinions in a text and present your evaluation or judgment. To do this well, you should be able to understand the topic from different perspectives.

What is meant by evaluation or judgment?

After determining specific criteria, decide the strengths and weaknesses of the article. Evaluating requires an understanding of not just the content of the text, but also an understanding of the purpose, the intended audience and structure.

What is meant by analysis?

Analyzing requires separating the content and concepts of a text into their main components and then understanding how these interrelate, connect, and possibly influence each other.

Structure of a Critical Review

Critical reviews, both short (one page) and long (four pages), usually have a similar structure. Check your assignment instructions for formatting and structural specifications. Headings are usually optional for longer reviews and can be helpful for the reader.

1. Introduction

- The length of an introduction is usually one paragraph for a journal article review. Include a few opening sentences that announce the author(s) and the title, and briefly explain the topic of the text. Present the aim of the text and summarize the main finding or key argument. Conclude the introduction with a brief statement of your evaluation of the text. This can be a positive or negative evaluation or a mixed response.

2. Summary

- Present a summary of the key points along with a limited number of examples. You can also briefly explain the author's purpose/intentions throughout the text and you

may briefly describe how the text is organized. The summary should only make up about a third of the critical review.

3. Critique

- The critique should be a balanced discussion and evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, and notable features of the text. Remember to base your discussion on specific criteria. Good reviews also include other sources to support your evaluation (remember to reference).
- You can choose how to sequence your critique. Here are some examples to get you started:
 - a. Most important to least important conclusions you make about the text.
 - b. If your critique is more *positive* than negative, then present the negative points first and the positive last.
 - c. If your critique is more *negative* than positive, then present the positive points first and the negative last.
 - d. If there are both strengths and weakness for each criterion you use, you need to decide overall what your judgment is. For example, you may want to comment on a key idea in the text and have both positive and negative comments. You could begin by stating what is good about the idea and then concede and explain how it is limited in some way. While this example shows a mixed evaluation, overall you are probably being more negative than positive.
 - e. In long reviews, you can address each criterion you choose in a paragraph, including both negative and positive points. For very short critical reviews (one page or less) where your comments will be briefer, include a paragraph of positive aspects and another of negative.
 - f. You can also include recommendations for how the text can be improved in terms of ideas, research approach; theories or frameworks used can also be included in the critique section.

4. Conclusion

- This is usually a very short paragraph.
- Restate your overall opinion of the text.
- Briefly present recommendations.
- If necessary, some further qualification or explanation of your judgment can be included. This can help your critique sound fair and reasonable.

5. References

- If you have used other sources in you review you should also include a list of references at the end of the review.