

HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW

- A review is different from a report.
- A book, play, movie, or any other item of interest must be evaluated for its strengths and weaknesses.
- Your judgments are necessary and must be explained.
- You must, obviously, first read or watch what you are reviewing.
- Do not forget that you must try to form your judgements about the quality of the material as you read or watch.
- It is a good idea to make notes while you are reading or watching so that you will remember your first impressions of the material.
- Whether you “like” or “dislike” what you are watching is not as important as the good and bad qualities which it has.
- Consult a dictionary or use a computer spell-check for proper spelling.
- Specific content and methods will depend on the nature of the material and especially the subject with which you are dealing. A History book review is different from an English book review.
- Your teachers will give you more details.

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY

- *Specific essay formats vary from subject to subject but all essays would benefit from these few suggestions.*
- **Get a topic.** An essay must present a particular idea in an organized manner. It's hard to present an idea in any manner when you don't have an idea with which to begin. Pick a topic (e.g. "School") and narrow it to something specific (e.g. "The Effect of School on a Teenager's Social Life").
- **Establish a Thesis For Your Topic.** A thesis is a point of view to give your essay some direction. Without a thesis, your essay becomes a report (it is assumed that when a teacher wants "an essay" he or she means "an essay" and NOT "a report") and your marks will most likely suffer. Do some reading on your chosen topic to help you choose a point of view if you have problems deciding on one. ("School is a great place to improve a teenager's social life". Be as daring with your point of view as you want as long as you can support it!)
- **Research.** No matter what your essay topic is, it is essential that you complete your research before beginning to write. Make sure that the books, magazines, newspapers, Internet, and other sources you use contain reliable information and consider the biases and slants the authors take in their material. Also make sure that the sources you choose for your research concern your topic.
- **Outline Your Work.** Before writing your essay, organize your information by creating a blueprint. Some essays will require a five paragraph format and some will not so check with your teacher on the required style and format. A blueprint will help you determine if your information is important and if you have enough information to prove your thesis.

Introductory Paragraph (Contains motivator*, thesis, blueprint)

Main Paragraphs (Arrange your work logically to support your argument. Each paragraph should contain a sub-topic relating to your thesis.)

Conclusion (Summarize your essay and retell your thesis.)

*The motivator is always the first section of the introductory paragraph. It captures the attention of the reader. Ask your teacher for more details.

- **Write a Rough Draft.** No writer is so good that he or she can write an essay or anything perfectly on the first try. Sometimes it takes many tries to get a piece of writing to sound "good". Consult a dictionary for proper spelling. If you are using a computer, run off a copy of your first draft and proof read it or have someone else read it to help you determine how it can be improved.
- **Read your essay out loud.** It helps you to find typos, and identifies awkward phrases. If it is difficult to say, then it is difficult to understand.

- ***Write the Final Draft.*** Is your essay ready to be carved in stone for the world to see until the end of time? If not, return to step five. You're not ready yet.
- ***Hand In All Your Research Notes, Indicating the Source for Each One.*** Also hand in your rough draft(s) with your final copy. Be sure you have a neat, accurate title page. No rough notes and rough draft mean the final copy will NOT be marked.
If you are using notes from the Internet or from an encyclopedia in your rough notes, highlight pertinent passages and indicate how these passages will be used in your essay.
- ***You must include parenthetical documentation*** to indicate source of direct quotes or important ideas.
- ***Never use the "first person" when writing a formal essay.*** Third person is always used.
Incorrect: I think that Ophelia was a victim of Hamlet's indecision.
Correct: Ophelia was a victim of Hamlet's indecision.

COMMON INSTRUCTIONAL TERMS

<i>Analyze</i>	to “break apart” and show the relevance of each part to the whole
<i>Argue</i>	to adopt a point of view and support it with relevant data
<i>Assess</i>	to state how important something is or is not and to give reasons to support the argument
<i>Compare</i>	to point out similarities
<i>Contrast</i>	to point out differences
<i>Criticize</i>	to pass judgement on the merits or faults of what you are studying
<i>Describe</i>	to give a word “picture”
<i>Evaluate</i>	to judge the importance, value or truth of a statement and give evidence to prove the judgement
<i>Examine</i>	to inspect, to consider all aspects, to observe something
<i>Explain</i>	to make a point clear using a logical, step by step procedure
<i>Justify</i>	to prove or give reasons for a particular stance
<i>Outline</i>	to write a brief skeleton account of or about some person, place, event, etc.
<i>Paraphrase</i>	to write in your own words
<i>Prove</i>	to establish that something is true by giving factual evidence or clear, logical reasons
<i>Show</i>	to give evidence or display knowledge about something
<i>Summarize</i>	to boil down to essential points
<i>Trace</i>	to outline, to give a brief account of a set of events