



# WRITE NIGHT GROUP FEEDBACK GUIDELINES

**Welcome to Write Night!** We are so glad you are with us. Here are some guidelines for our group and helpful suggestions for the critiquing process. If you have any questions, contact [writenightwa@gmail.com](mailto:writenightwa@gmail.com).

**Expectations for Write Night Attendees:** Be committed to write regularly, to have an open mind to comments, and to learn and grow. We are here to make everyone a better writer.

## **A Writing Group CAN Provide:**

1. A deadline.
2. Feedback on your story.
3. Your words connecting to readers.
4. Social connections. Forming ties with other writers.
5. A place to discuss writing issues; ideas and thoughts about the process of writing.
6. Motivation and inspiration. And fun!

## **A Writing Group CANNOT Provide:**

1. Validation: this is not talk therapy; validation must come from within.
2. Someone to tell you you're a great writer. Or to tell you how to be a great writer.
3. Line-editing of your manuscript. While you may receive notes on commas or sentence length, most feedback should focus on items like: theme, clarity, setting, flow, or pacing.
4. Proof you have talent. Forget about talent, it's about writing every day and sticking with it.
5. A place to vent frustrations. This is not an open forum for you to be critical.

**Keep an open mind.** Your attitude about the process is the best road to success.

**Write Night Submissions:** Like any general writing contest, pieces that you bring to Write Night should be appropriate for a general audience. Avoid anything too violent, too sexually explicit, overly religious or overly political.

**The Critiquing Process:** The purpose of critique is to provide useful information and feedback without deflating the writer's ego--be helpful and inspiring.

### Responding to Another Group Member's Writing:

- Keep an open mind as you hear the piece. It's okay if you are not the target audience.
- Begin by saying something positive and encouraging. Tell the author what's working in their piece. Note a great character, description, even a sentence that spoke to you.
- Respond from your own point of view and use 'I' statements. "My reaction to this was ..." "I found this to be ..." "I thought your use of language here was inspiring."
- On the flip side of the positive comment, do give the writer something they can use to improve their piece—that's why we are here! Yet remember, critique the writing not the writer. The same for the subject matter—focus your comments on the writing.
- Use specific comments rather than general statements; "nice," "good," "bad" don't help the writer. Instead of just saying, "The characterization needs work," try to figure out what the writer could do to make you like or understand the character better.
- Tell how you reacted to the piece, how it made you feel and where you got confused or couldn't follow the narrative.
- Make notes regarding spelling, punctuation, typos etc. directly on the manuscript for the writer to review later; no need to discuss line-editing.
- Imagine yourself on the receiving end of the comment. Phrase your comments in a way that you would find helpful. Remember, you are not trying to rewrite their manuscript, only providing your reactions and suggestions on their submission.

### When you are being critiqued:

- Before you read aloud, introduce *what* the piece is in a general way to give the group a sense of what they are about to hear: fiction/non-fiction, short/long, complete/only part of a story, etc. Don't apologize or tell us you *just* wrote it, or you didn't edit it.
  - a. You may ask for specific feedback. For example: "I would really like to hear what folks think of the character Bob." Or "I am struggling with POV and would like suggestions."
- Read your piece aloud. Feel free to make notes when you stumble during the reading.
- The writer then stays silent while the group makes their comments. Don't defend or explain your writing. Remember, every reader is different and coming from a different perspective.
  - a. Listen and take notes. Something that doesn't feel right that night might make more sense tomorrow. But also take in the positive comments—you deserve them!
- Keep an open mind--these are potential readers responding to your work.

***Note: You can also get tips for improvement from listening to members critiquing others!***

### After you go home:

Not all feedback will work for your manuscript. You are the author. You decide what comments to use to improve your piece and which ones to discard.

If a similar comment came from several people, you may want to consider it or re-write around the issue. But the final decision is yours. You don't have to take anyone's suggestions or advice. Do what feels right for you and right for your vision of the piece.