



# Writing Center

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## THE CRITIQUE

**Definition:** a formalized, critical reading of a passage  
It is a personal response, but more *rigorous* than a simple opinion.

**Your task** is to turn critical reading into systematic evaluation in order to deepen the reader's (and your own) understanding of the article.

### **A Critique is a Claim of Value**

1. State Criteria
2. Measure the item against those criteria

**Criteria:** (You do **not** have to consider all these criteria; utilize those that are most appropriate.)

1. Purpose/ audience -- Why does the author address that audience?
2. Thesis (main idea) -- Is it direct and clear?
3. Evidence -- What is the support?
  - a. Is it accurate?
  - b. Is it significant?
  - c. Has the author interpreted information fairly?
  - d. Has he defined terms carefully?
  - e. Has he used information fairly?
  - f. Has he argued logically?
4. Refutation -- Is the opposition treated fairly?
  - a. Would the opponents agree with the author's summary of their position?
  - b. Does the author show the opposition to be false?
  - c. Are there significant opposing arguments the author has overlooked?
5. Persona -- what is the author's "personality"?
  - a. What is his attitude?
  - b. Is he believable?
  - c. Is he obviously biased?
  - d. Does the language add to credibility, or is it offensive?
  - e. Do you trust him to be fair and open-minded?

**Method/ Generic Outline:**

- I. Introduction of the piece and the author
  - A. State the author's main argument
  - B. Provide background information, including
    1. Biographical information;
    2. Comments about circumstances under which article was written that would aid the reader's understanding.
  - C. Context: Is it part of a book or magazine with specialized audience?
  - D. Is there controversy surrounding the article or the subject?
  - E. Why is it of current interest?
- II. Briefly summarize the author's main arguments, state key assumptions.
- III. State the criteria by which you will evaluate the passage (see page 1).
- IV. Do you agree with the author? State point(s) you intend to make.
  - a. Identify points of agreement and disagreement
  - b. Explore the reasons for agreement and disagreement
- V. State conclusions about the overall validity of the passage. Remind the reader of weaknesses and strengths, and discuss implications of your analysis