

Writing a Book Review

There are two types of book reviews: descriptive book reviews and critical book reviews.

- A **descriptive or informative book review** is similar to a book report in that it describes the book's plot and gives essential information in a neutral manner.
- A **critical or analytical book review** both describes and evaluates the information that an author has provided in a book in terms of its strengths, weaknesses and validity.

Typically, university students are more likely to be assigned a critical book review.

A complete critical book review should contain several key elements:

- Bibliographic information (author, title, edition, publisher, place and year of publication)
- A brief explanation or summary of the book's contents, as well as its genre
- An interpretation of the information
- An analysis of the findings
- An assessment of the author's purpose in writing the book and whether the author has authority of the subject (credentials or expertise)
- A critical assessment of the book, including its strengths, weaknesses, and validity
- Textual evidence to support the assessment

How to begin writing a critical book review

Skim Over the Book:

- Consider the title, table of contents, preface, and organization.

Read the Text and Take Notes:

- Record the genre, point of view, author's style, authority and accuracy of information, elements of the text (character, plot, setting, theme), format, author's sources, and the accomplishments the book has made.

Make an Outline:

- Organize your thoughts to create a purpose or thesis for the review.
- Outline the arguments logically to support your thesis.

Create the Rough Draft:

- Write an introductory sentence or heading that includes the preliminary bibliographic information.
- Create an introduction that catches the reader's attention and states your central purpose for writing the review.
- Form body paragraphs that describe, evaluate and analyze the book while using the arguments created in the outline.
- Sum up with a concluding paragraph that gives a final assessment of the book and restates the thesis.

Revise the Rough Draft:

- Allow a couple of days to pass before revising the paper, to gain perspective.
- Read through the critical book review to check for clarity and coherence.
- Properly cite and reference any quotations that have been used.
- Check that grammar and spelling are correct.

Reference

Northey, M. & McKibbin, J. (2009). *Making sense: A student's guide to research and writing* (6th ed.). Don Mills: Oxford University Press.