

How to Be a Good Workshop Partner

Overview

We are here to help one another become better writers, to help our workshop partners improve the quality of their work. To that end, here's how we want you to approach this task: *Think of this group as the editorial board at a publishing house or a magazine which has already accepted the piece.* Your job is to help the writer make their piece reach its full potential.

The first email of the month is a reminder of the deadline to submit. This email will also tell you how many spots have already been reserved and how many spots are available on a first-come, first-served basis. At this point, do not email to reserve a spot; simply email your submission when ready to gcwriters@gcld.org.

The next email you will receive is a reminder of the workshop meeting date and time, the Zoom link, and PDFs of the submissions we will go over at the meeting.

At the meeting, we will critique up to four submissions and you will provide the author with your feedback either in hard copy or with an annotated PDF. At the end of the meeting, we will schedule next meetings, and those who wish to reserve a future spot can do so.

Submission Process

- Submissions can be fiction or non-fiction, in the form of short story, chapter of a novel, poetry, personal essay, or screenplay.
- We strongly suggest submissions be formatted based on industry standards:
 - **File type must be PDF.** This is to prevent the spread of malware and viruses.
 - Double-spaced
 - 12 point Times New Roman font
 - Number your pages
 - Maximum length is about 2,500 words. This works out to around 10 pages.
There is no minimum length
 - Ask about exceptions if submitting poetry or screenplay.
- Email submissions to [**gcwriters@gcld.org**](mailto:gcwriters@gcld.org)
- Submissions are due one week prior to the meeting. This gives everyone a chance to read and prepare their feedback before the workshop meeting. Early submissions are encouraged, since a limited number of slots are available.

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Guidelines for Authors

Please include some summary information about your submission. Specify whether it is fiction, non-fiction, memoir, personal essay, poetry, magazine article, or whatever. Clarify your intentions with the piece—whether you aim to submit it for publication, share it with family or a select group of friends, or target a specific audience. Please indicate any particular areas where you seek feedback, such as dialogue, description, or character development.

You are strongly encouraged to keep silent when receiving commentary. You will have time to explain or respond after all commenters have had their say.

If your work is being discussed, here's Marty's advice: Chances are, nearly every one of your colleagues in this class will be smart, helpful, courteous, kind, and sincerely interested in trying to help you improve your work. If the feedback rings true, be honest with yourself and use it to improve your story. If not, feel free to disregard any part that you do not find helpful. Then thank the reader for taking the time to read and think about your work.

Guidelines for Critics

Having read the work in the week leading up to the meeting, we will go around the table. Each of you will be asked to offer your thoughts about the piece. Everyone's opinion is valid, and it's up to the writer to sift what's useful from what's not. You do not have to be exhaustive in giving your commentary; after all, there are several others who may have similar feedback to your own, and you don't want to freeze them out. Additionally, don't get bogged down in specific examples from the text when those are already marked in your hard copy or PDF annotations. We suggest a simple formula: 1/3 Sincere Praise + 2/3 Constructive Criticism = Optimum Participation.

It is not your task to tell the writer how to "fix" their piece. You are there to give feedback that the author can use to decide how they can improve their piece. To use a metaphor, give your symptoms, and let the author diagnose and come up with a treatment if needed.

While critiquing a submission, you may ask the author for clarifications if needed. However, we do not want to get into a back-and-forth discussion that will consume too much time. Also, the workshop participant should discuss what the author has put down on the page, not what they thought was there. Be mindful of the time you are taking when commenting. Depending on the number of submissions and attendees, each participant has approximately 3-4 minutes.

How to annotate PDF files

These instructions are specific to Adobe Acrobat Reader, but similar tools will be available in your program of choice. <https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/commenting-pdfs.html>